Commentary

VOLUME NINETY-NINE • NUMBER FOUR • APRIL 1995

WHAT TO DO ABOUT The Arts

Joseph Epstein

Bosnia: Is It Too Late?

A Debate

Patrick Glynn / Eugene V. Rostow

An Unsung Jewish Prophet / Edward Norden

What My Father Knew / Ruth R. Wisse

Holy Minimalism / Terry Teachout

Agents of Influence / David Pryce-Jones

She Lost It at the Movies / Daniel J. Silver

Books in Review: Chester E. Finn, Jr. / David Singer / Adam Schulman / Peter W. Rodman / Adam Wolfson

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A tall order: Stop terrorism.

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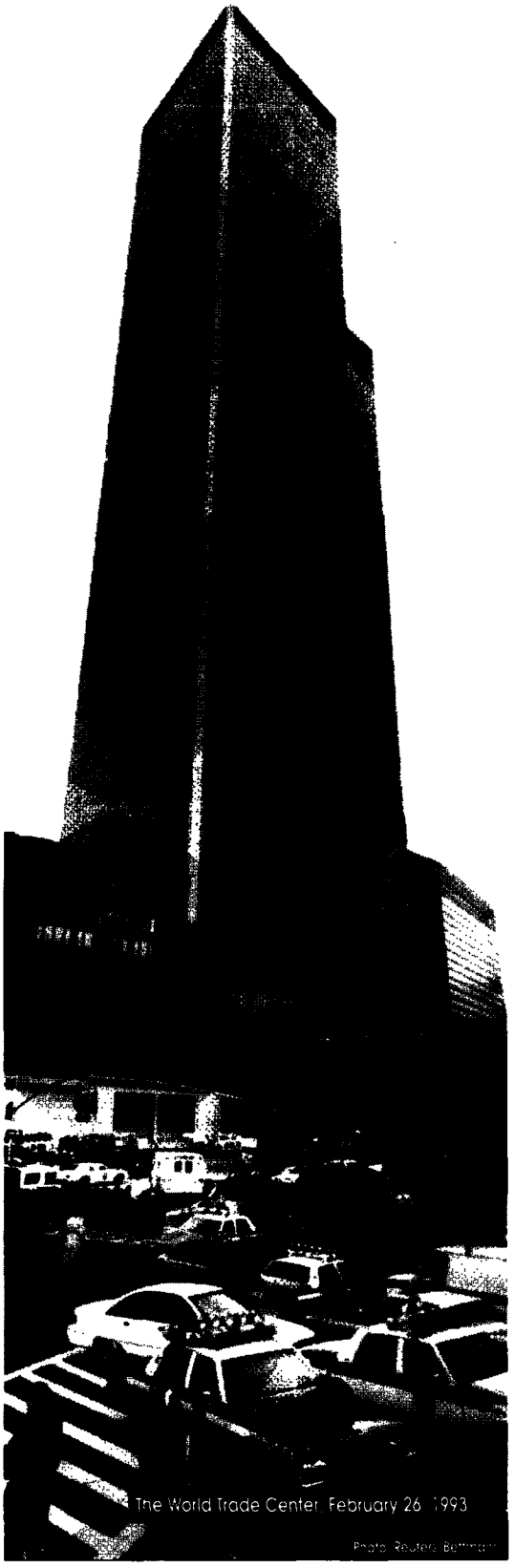
Second, the international community's tolerance of states that support terrorism must end. In Europe and the Far East, nations that extend preferential loans and other concessions to such states must be pressed to reconsider their shortsighted policies.

Third, moderate Arab states must be supported in their efforts to contain the forces of extremism. They are on the front line in this struggle.

Fourth, we must work to further the process of reconciliation between Israel and the Arab world which benefits the entire region, and undercuts the appeal of extremism.

These steps will enhance safety across the globe, in every land menaced by terrorism, including our own. It's a tall order . . . and a vital one.



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Letters from Readers

Religion in America

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Paul Johnson's article, "God and the Americans" [January], has renewed my concern that we are demonizing Protestant and Catholic fundamentalists.

Years ago in my autobiography, *The Day Is Short*, I wrote of my anguish as a child in a rural South Georgia school system which "was properly designated public if by that one meant tax-supported, but in all other respects [was] a white Protestant institution which began each day with a prayer."

Nevertheless, I retain memories of the fine character and beneficences of so many devout evangelicals and fundamentalists in my native town.

Mr. Johnson astutely demonstrates how the fundamentalist tradition in this country extends back to its Founding, and how it has always been anti-clerical and therefore anti-theocracy, that is, squarely against state religion. Additionally, it is a highly individualistic tradition, which means today, as it meant 300 years ago, that fundamentalists are accepting, tolerant, and even welcoming of other faiths—so long as they are centered on belief in God and moral values.

In my life there is no better example of this than E.J. Dorminey, the Sheriff of Ben Hill County, Georgia. He was a primitive, foot-washing Baptist who befriended my Jewish immigrant father, voted for the Catholic Al Smith for President in 1928, and single-handedly ran the Ku Klux Klan out of the county.

The episode with the Klan especially illuminates the deep moral character and beliefs of Sheriff Dorminey, an archetypal Southern fundamentalist who never missed a camp meeting, a revival, or a gospel sing.

When the Klan tried to organize in Ben Hill County, they offered the first membership to Sheriff Dorminey. The Sheriff thanked them for the offer and asked them their beliefs, to which the Klan organizer said, "We believe in Americanism."

"What does Americanism mean to you?" asked the Sheriff.

The organizer said, "We are against Niggers, Catholics, and Jews."

Dorminey replied, "That's not my definition of Americanism," to which the organizer responded by threatening to ensure Dorminey's defeat in the next election.

Sheriff Dorminey did not waver for a moment. He told the organizer, "If you break the law, I'll run you right out the county." And on discovering that the Klan organizer was wanted on a warrant for a crime in Indiana, he did just that.

E.J. Dorminey respected the law and he respected individuals, whom the law was designed to protect. Neither he nor those who walk in his shoes today desired a state religion, worked for a state religion, or would tolerate a state religion. But he would be opposed to taking the motto "In God We Trust" off our currency, or forbidding the Congress to begin its sessions with a prayer, or removing the phrase "One nation under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance, or prohibiting chaplains from accompanying America's sons into battle.

Backwoods sheriff though he might have been, E.J. Dorminey understood that these national expressions of faith merely signify the moral and ethical values that form the bedrock of American society—what he called "Americanism."

And one more thing: I am sure that if E.J. Dorminey were alive today he would be in the vanguard of his co-religionists who overwhelmingly support the democratic, law-abiding, and God-revering state of Israel.

MORRIS B. ABRAM
Honorary President
American Jewish Committee
Geneva, Switzerland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is not often that I am moved to write to an editor about an article. In this case, however, I am compelled to do so. I refer to Paul Johnson's magnificent "God and the Americans." Mr. Johnson shows how the thread of religious and civilizing values has been woven into the history and fabric of the American experiment, and how the concept of "The City Upon a Hill" provided a firm foundation on which to build a sound and productive nation.

As Mr. Johnson righly points out, certain fringe and cult groups which are opposed to the Judeo-Christian consensus have have been given special media attention

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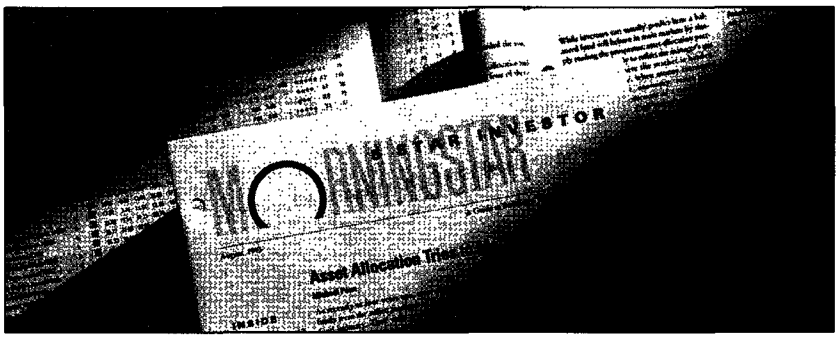

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and are having a divisive influence upon society at large.

Mr. Johnson tells us about Middletown and how to get there. This is one move I will relish. I'm leaving now—hope to see you there.

ALBERT M. WELLS, JR.
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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"God and the Americans" is a brilliant and fundamentally sound account of the role of religion in the formation of America's political institutions. It is especially sound in its assertion that Abraham Lincoln is the key figure in understanding the American experience in its struggle—then and now—to reconcile its principles with its practices.

Mr. Johnson's account is, however, marred by some minor inaccuracies and by a major omission. He writes, "The liberal elements captured Harvard in 1707 and founded Yale . . . nine years later." Every Yalie knows (I am class of 1939) that "Yale was begun back in seventeen one. . . ." More important is his assertion that Lincoln "was theoretically a Baptist" but that "we have his wife's word . . . that he never truly belonged to any church." In nearly 50 years of studying Lincoln, I never encountered the "theory" of Lincoln as a Baptist, and cannot imagine where Mr. Johnson found it. As to Lincoln's never belonging to any church, we do not need to rely on his wife's testimony. In 1846, in his campaign for Congress, Lincoln was accused of infidelity by supporters of his opponent, Peter Cartwright, a Methodist preacher. Lincoln published a statement of his religious views, the only one of its kind he ever made. In the course of it he said,

> That I am not a member of any Christian Church, is true; but I have never denied the truth of Scriptures; and I have never spoken with intentional disrespect of religion in general, or of any denomination of Christians in particular.

Mr. Johnson, following Tocqueville, recognizes that out of the diversity of churches arose a kind of religious unity, supporting a common morality. Without this, government of majority rule and minority rights would not have been possible. No one has expressed the ecumenical character of American religion better than Thomas Jefferson, in his inaugural address, March 4, 1801. His fellow-countrymen were, he said,

> enlightened by a benign religion, professed, indeed, and practiced in various forms, yet all of them including honesty, truth, temperance, gratitude, and the love of man; acknowledging and adoring an overruling Providence, which by all its dispensations proves that it delights in the happiness of man here and his greater happiness hereafter. . . .

According to Jefferson, no less than Washington in his Farewell Address, this "benign religion" was indispensable to the support of republican government. Lincoln inherited this conviction from both.

What Mr. Johnson appears not to appreciate, however, is that this religion was compounded of teachings derived from right reason no less than from the Bible. What follows is from a sermon by the Reverend Samuel Cooper, preached before the Governor, John Hancock, and the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, on October 25, 1780, on the occasion of the inauguration of the new constitution:

> We want not, indeed, a special revelation from heaven to teach us that men are born equal and free; that no man has a natural claim to domination over his neighbors, nor one nation any such claim upon another; and that as government is only the administration of the affairs of a number of men combined for their own security and happiness, such a society has a right freely to determine by whom and in what manner their own affairs shall be administered. These are the plain dictates and common sense with which the common parent of men has informed the human bosom. It is, however, a satisfaction to observe such everlasting maxims of equity confirmed, and impressed upon the consciences of men, by the instructions, precepts, and examples given us in the sacred oracles; one internal mark of their divine original, and that they come from Him "who hath made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth," whose authority sanctifies only those governments that instead of oppressing any part of His family vindicates the oppressed, and restrains and punishes the oppressor.

The foregoing is no more than a restatement of the principles of "the laws of nature and of nature's God" in the Declaration of Independence. Cooper's sermon could have served as prologue to the United States Constitution no less than to that of Massachusetts. The religion of the American Founding embraced the laws of nature, wherein God speaks to us in those "dictates of . . . reason" that are "everlasting maxims of equity." These are confirmed by "the sacred oracles," but they represent the voice of God no less than the oracles. It is this harmony of reason and revelation in the natural law, a harmony perfectly independent of any particular church doctrines, that constitutes the American civil religion. This is the profound source of the vitality of our political institutions.

Slavery was certainly the oppression of one part of God's family, and nothing is more certain than that it is condemned by the dictates of reason and of revelation to which Cooper appeals. Mr. Johnson notes that in the Civil War the American churches, North and South, divided over the question of slavery, and (as Lincoln noted) both sides appealed to the Bible. What he fails to note is that the biblical defense of slavery is divorced from the natural rights of the laws of nature. The religious passions of the South were enlisted in behalf of state rights only after Calhoun had severed the connection in the public mind of the South between state rights and natural rights. Until that connection had been severed, the idea of a right of secession in defense of slavery would have been inconceivable. Lincoln's religion, like Cooper's, was guided in its interpretation of the Bible by those "everlasting maxims of equity" which recognized that God "hath made of one blood all nations. . . ."

Mr. Johnson sees the failure of present-day religion in the doctrine of proliferating rights, grounded only in the uncontrolled will of the individual. But he does not see—or at least does not see with sufficient clarity—that this also represents a break with the doctrine of the Founding. In 1776 it was believed that our rights were received from our Creator and therefore that respect for the rights of

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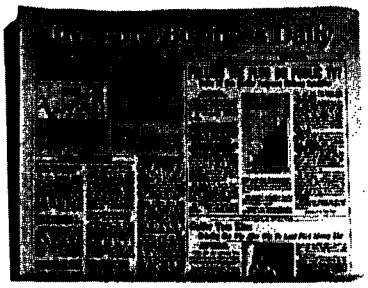

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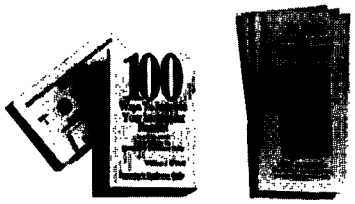

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others was part of our duty to God. There were no rights without corresponding duties.

Most important of all, however, was the conviction that "the laws of nature" represented an objective moral order, knowable by reason, and confirmed by faith, and that all political institutions were in the service of this order. . . .

Mr. Johnson sees, as I do, the moral chaos of today. But he is mistaken in saying that

> it is impossible for any religious philosophy to be rights-based. From a religious perspective, strictly speaking, no being has rights except God. Human beings merely have duties—to God and each other—and the function of a church is to teach and endeavor to enforce those duties.

When Jesus said to do unto others as we would have others do unto us, he invited us to judge what we owed to others by what we understood to be good for ourselves. In short, he meant to enjoin upon mankind a mutual relationship of rights and duties, arising from a reasoned understanding of ourselves and of other human beings, sharing a common nature. He certainly did not mean to endorse unnatural actions by "consenting adults." . . .

The proliferation of rights-driven demands is destroying society, because the idea of rights, divorced from the natural moral order, is anarchical. But the theology of most of our churches and synagogues is today also divorced from that same order. Thus moral anarchy is the "trickle-down" effect of an intellectual anarchy that dominates our elites. Consider this pronouncement of the present Chief Justice of the United States. The "nature of political value judgments in a democratic society" is such, he writes, that

> if such society adopts a constitution and incorporates in that constitution safeguards for individual liberty, these safeguards do indeed take on a generalized moral rightness or goodness. They assume a general social acceptance neither because of any intrinsic worth nor because of any unique origins in someone's idea of natural justice but instead simply because they have been incorporated in a constitution by the people.

In the Constitution of 1787, and in the Bill of Rights added to it in 1791, there are many famous safeguards of individual liberty. Yet, we are told, these do not have "any intrinsic worth." They are accepted not because they are good, but good only because they are accepted! The same Constitution, however, also had safeguards for chattel slavery—most notably the fugitive-slave clause of Article IV. According to Justice Rehnquist, the safeguards of slavery and the safeguards of individual freedom have exactly the same moral status. The denial of "any intrinsic worth" to any moral judgments is of the essence of moral relativism, grounded in nihilism. Unfortunately, Justice Rehnquist is a typical intellectual of our times, whether of the Right or of the Left. He represents that complete alienation from the principles of the Founding which runs through all our institutions today.

Paul Johnson ends his essay by asking what Abraham Lincoln, "this remarkable man," would think today. That he would prefer "Middletown" to "Sodom and Gomorrah," as Mr. Johnson thinks, may be taken for granted. I think, however, that he would be as outraged by Chief Justice Rehnquist as he was by Chief Justice Taney. That the moral foundations of the Constitution were antecedent to the Constitution, and that they were embodied in the Declaration of Independence, was the central theme of his life and thought. I believe he would argue for the restoration of that theme today, exactly as he did in the years before the Civil War. All we need to do to have him with us now is to read what he said then.

HARRY V. JAFFA
Claremont, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Throughout the greater part of his essay, Paul Johnson seems to agree that the separation of religion from our civic life is deeply rooted in our political ethos not because we are indifferent to religion but because our Founding Fathers wanted to safeguard the right of every individual to religious freedom while allowing the government to pass laws that must be obeyed by all. Mr. Johnson quotes the words of Roger Williams regarding the right of the colony of Providence to pass any law concerning the conduct of its citizens, except those that would infringe on the freedom of all men to "walk as their consciences per-

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suades them, everyone in the name of his God." How then can Mr. Johnson conclude with the assertion that the moral consensus which gives unity to this nation is based on "deep religious values," values which are threatened by growing secularism?

He does so in two ways. First, he limits the meaning of religion to the virtues we all agree are necessary for a civil society and leaves out those beliefs in every religion that deal with man's relationship to God. Mr. Johnson quotes with approval the opinion of John Adams, crediting "the Christian religion" with bringing the basic moral values "to the knowledge, belief, and veneration of the whole people."

If that were true, and if all that was involved in the Christian religion was a belief in "the great principle of nature . . . love your neighbor as yourself. . . ," Mr. Johnson would be right in agreeing with Adams, and in saying that the "Christianity that had developed in America was a kind of ecumenical and unofficial state religion [that] . . . was itself the civil and moral creed of republicanism."

But Mr. Johnson surely knows better; he surely knows that to be a Christian then, and now, is not merely to believe in the golden rule but to have beliefs about God, Jesus, sin, salvation, and eternal life, as well as to have the particular beliefs of one's own denomination. Moreover, to be an Anglican, Baptist, Unitarian, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, etc. in the 18th century was to believe that the tenets held by all other denominations were false. Rather than uniting people in a moral consensus, religion divided people, and for that reason most Americans in the 18th century wanted Congress to make no law establishing any religion and to prohibit any religious test as a requirement for any public office or public trust.

The Founders of our republic and the majority of Americans throughout our history knew that we could have consensus on the moral value of respecting the person and property of others as we would like them to respect our person and property, *without* a consensus on the nature of God, salvation, and eternal life. Americans in the 18th century also realized that men who had no belief at all in Christianity but were deists, men like Benjamin Franklin, Tho-

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A Demilitarized Palestinian State
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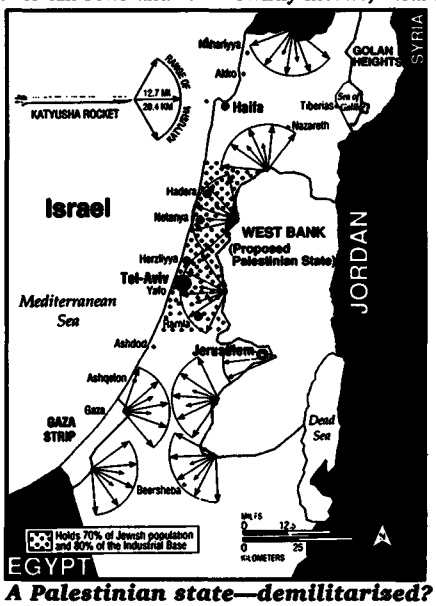
Even those most sanguine about the current peace negotiations are agreed that the Palestinian entity to be founded should be demilitarized. A demilitarized "West Bank" and Gaza Strip, it is believed, would do away with any military threat to the state of Israel.

What are the facts?

Israel surrounded by implacable foes. The countries that surround Israel are its deadly enemies. With the exception of Egypt, all other Arab states are still in a declared state of war with Israel. Iran, Moslem though not Arab, lurks in the background, its foremost military and political objective being the destruction of the state of Israel.

The PLO, is a terror organization that has only one purpose: to kill Jews and to destroy the state of Israel. While the latter objective is beyond its reach, it has been most successful in the former. It seems almost incomprehensible that a group as supposedly levelheaded as the government of Israel would have entered into a "peace agreement" with such an organization. Not surprisingly, events since the famous "handshake" confirm such skepticism. The PLO has totally ignored Israel's main requirement, namely that it forswear the clause in its "covenant" that calls for the destruction of Israel. Arafat and his lieutenants continue to make blood-curdling speeches to the Arab public, in which they re-assert their old goal of destroying Israel in "stages".



A Palestinian state—demilitarized?

The myth of demilitarization. The assumption that "Palestine" would be demilitarized is not tenable. The Arab nations would not allow it, But mobilization of the "demilitarized" Palestine wouldn't really be required. The weapons of preference of Arab terrorists are the Soviet-made Katyusha rockets, highly effective missiles, truck-mounted and swiftly mobile, ideal for hit-and-run raids against Israel. A look at the map makes clear that these rockets, short-range though they may be, would literally dominate the heartland of Israel. Easily moved and hidden along Israel's new eastern borders—to be increased from about 40 miles to over 200 miles—they would rain destruction over most of Israel—covering in their entirety Israel's narrow waist that holds 70% of the Jewish population of the country, 80% of its industrial base, its only international airport, and its most important military installations.

The Arabs danced on the roofs of their houses when Iraqi Scud missiles fell on Tel Aviv during the Gulf War. Since the signing of the "peace agreement" they have continued in unrestrained terror and murder against the Jews—and against each other. Their hatred is undiminished and their avowed intention to destroy Israel has not been forsworn—in fact, it has repeatedly been re-affirmed. Only incurable optimists can believe that an "autonomous" Palestine would wish to become a peaceful neighbor of Israel. If Israel ceded the Gaza Strip—the invasion route since before biblical times—and Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") to its sworn enemies it would make the country indefensible. Tanks, warplanes, and missiles would only be needed for the final mopping-up process. In the meantime, mortars and Katyushas located on the Judean ridges—Israel's proposed new borders—would suffice to neutralize life and industrial and military activity in Israel.

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mas Jefferson, James Madison, and John Adams, could be entrusted with the moral leadership in civil affairs as much as others who were Christians.

Mr. Johnson seems to grant this point at the end of the essay when he defends his thesis about the importance of religion to the "moral creed of republicanism" by falling back on the assertion that even if religious doctrines have no connection with secular moral values, a belief in religion usually strengthens our commitment to these values. Such a connection is possible; and many people are convinced that their conduct in secular affairs is affected by their belief in God. They may be right, although I find it hard to believe that anyone needs a faith in some unseen power to obey the commonly accepted laws, when the reason for such obedience is, in most cases, clear enough in pragmatic terms. But the opposite case is also true: those who violate commonly accepted moral views often justify such violations by referring to their religious beliefs which they regard as having a higher authority than any government. An example of this view can be seen most recently in the murders of those assisting in abortions. . . .

What Mr. Johnson fails to realize is that the great importance of religion in the lives of most Americans throughout our history was based on religion's power to give a spiritual dimension to life, a dimension that concerns our relationship to God rather than to other human beings. That is why the moral consensus on which our government is based is not religious but secular, that is, based on our experience in this world as interpreted by our reason. For it is only by an appeal to reason that our republican creed can appeal to everyone, and so unite people with different religious faiths. That is what the Founders of this republic did when they wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and that is what we must do now to strengthen the moral consensus on which the unity of this nation rests.

LAWRENCE HYMAN
Ridgewood, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was surprised that Paul Johnson, in his analysis of the religious basis of the American Revolution (Part 1, "The City Upon a Hill"), . . . does not discuss the concept of the Divine Right of Kings and its role in enforcing British monarchical hegemony over the colonies—a concept derived from and supported by Christian scripture. He also fails to mention how . . . Hebrew scriptures provided the philosophical basis for abolishing this anti-republican, anti-democratic political encumbrance. . . .

In Part 2, "The Moral Theology of the Melting Pot," Mr. Johnson lauds the development of church schools and correctly notes that they were "instruments . . . designed to serve religion," since education and faith were considered inseparable. Yet . . . he does not note the intense anti-Semitism of the Harvards and Yales and how Christian culture encouraged and abetted anti-Semitism. In fact, this pernicious antisocial practice pervaded Christian religious institutions until long after the Korean war. . . . Affirming a belief in the trinity was a prerequisite to holding public office in some states even into the 20th century. . . .

In Part 3, "Sodom, Gomorrah, and Middletown," Mr. Johnson shows a marked lack of knowledge of the dynamics underlying the anti-clericalism which he correctly perceives is occurring in the U.S. today and which he finds "potentially very dangerous". . . because of its inherent social divisiveness and challenge to the moral and religious consensus. Apparently Mr. Johnson has never lived in the Bible Belt South, or is ignorant of fundamentalism's devastating influence on all American life, not just in the South. . . .

Contrary to Mr. Johnson, rational anti-clericalism is not based on any conspiracy theory. Instead of being considered potentially dangerous, anti-clericalism can be viewed as advancing the cause of democracy and liberty. . . . For example, why should modern science education in public institutions be held hostage to the irrational religious beliefs of ranting fundamentalists? Why should young people be forced to accept the word of authority, especially when it is cloaked in the vestments of a representative of a deity and accompanied by threats of everlasting hell and damnation? Students should instead be taught the freedom-generating concepts of intellectual inquiry without precon-

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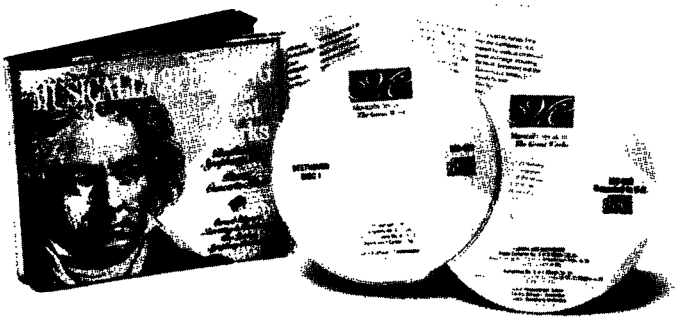

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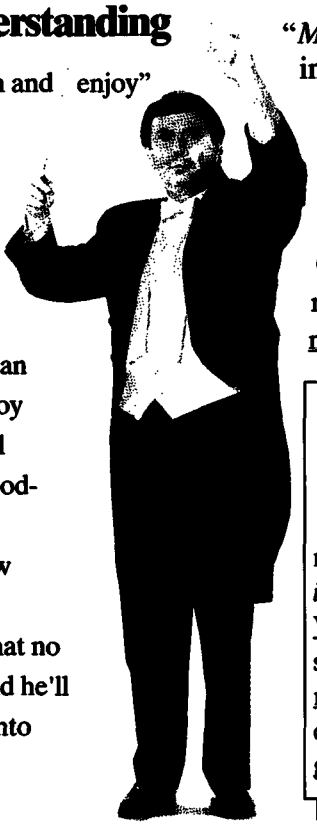

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ceived outcomes, of exploration of natural phenomena, of hypothesis-testing, of experimentation, of data analysis, and of the rational processes associated with inductive/deductive reasoning.

In my classes in Biology 101, seeing how students react to the teaching of the differences between science and religion and to the social upheavals associated with the teaching of evolution, and listening to them proclaim, "Faith is fact: that which I believe is fact"—one begins to glimpse the devastating effect of fundamentalism and its clergy on American life. And this is 1995.

I also take issue with Mr. Johnson when he implies that there can be no morality in the absence of religion . . . but does not discuss or defend this position. I find religious-based morality to be divisive and deadly. . . .

I contend that it is religion that has and is still waging war on society. The conflicts are not, as Mr. Johnson has it, based on the right of churches to preach and practice their religious beliefs but on the attempts of various religious organizations to force their particular beliefs and practices on others. . . .

The great virtue of the American experiment is that all groups willing to function under the legal codes of our society may preach and practice without fear of governmental or other institutional interventions. Mr. Johnson's labeling of those who profess different views as pagans or neopagans not only does not enhance discussion or debate but presents a frightening view that he would prefer a clerically-based, preferably a Christian-based society. Spare us.

SHELDON F. GOTTLIEB
University of South Alabama
Mobile, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The view that "the first American settlers" were English Protestant dissenters is a myth to which Paul Johnson should be more sensitive. . . . Obviously, the first settlers of North America were the migrants from Asia who were to become known as American Indians. The next settlers were Scandinavians from Iceland who established colonies which endured for several centuries. Beginning late in the 16th century, the Spanish moved from their beachhead in Central America into the Southwest (founding Santa Fe about 1610). Cartier founded Quebec in 1608, and the French moved and settled throughout North America. French and Spanish missionaries established a strong Catholic presence in the New World, and affected the settlement patterns of Indian peoples. The Dutch established New Netherlands in 1626. The Russians do not seem to have reached Alaska for another century.

That the Indian tribes of "New England" were settlers (rather than nomads) is evident from the seeds and horticultural instructions they conveyed to the colonists. Some of these Indian tribes were decimated by pandemics and warfare, but others were stimulated by the European presence, and the Iroquoian Confederacy became the Six Nations in 1735. They were then as numerous and powerful as the European invaders, and had been playing the Dutch, French, and British against one another in trade and warfare.

MURRAY L. WAX
Washington University
St. Louis, Missouri

Counterrevolution

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz, in his "Comes the Counterrevolution" [January], is correct to include "making appointments on the basis of race and gender" as part of Clinton's first mistake. Among these appointments was the person Mr. Podhoretz calls Clinton's "overbearing wife." Hillary Clinton was given an office and a White House job—in order to empower women. She symbolizes an idea: affirmative action. Affirmative action does not allow us to forget our identities, which must be considered whenever we apply for a job or a school. We have thus been divided into categories defined by law.

The law, as it happens, was never enacted by Congress. The Supreme Court, in its *Bakke* decision, ruled affirmative action simultaneously constitutional and unconstitutional. The issue has never been debated in a national election. Affirmative action has poisoned politics in America by turning us all into enemies, yet it itself remains outside the process.

Mr. Podhoretz reports that polls show "Most Americans everywhere have also turned decisively and definitively against . . . affirmative action, quotas, and reverse discrimination." So far, unfortunately, this issue does not seem to be a Republican priority. The policies in question date from the Nixon era and have survived the Reagan and Bush administrations.

Clinton's unpopularity, I suspect, is primarily due to his policy on affirmative action. He has, however, done some things that merit praise: Saudi Arabia has lifted its 46-year-old secondary boycott of companies doing business with Israel. According to a front-page story in the *New York Times* (September 30), "The decision is a personal achievement for Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who has made the issue of opening up Arab markets to American companies the centerpiece of Washington's policy toward the Gulf nations." The foreign policy of the Clinton administration has been consistently successful in that part of the world, starting with the solving of the problem created by the 400 militants trapped in no-man's-land on the Israeli-Lebanese border. Had the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on Israel at that time, which seemed likely, Israel might today be as diplomatically isolated as it was in 1989.

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ
College of Staten Island
Staten Island, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz has accurately described the reasons for the 1994 election results: "Most Americans have lost their faith in the vast network of social programs spawned by the Democrats in the late 1960's. . . ."

But why have Jewish voters not joined "most Americans"? Why did Jews vote 81 percent against the tide (American Jewish Congress exit polls)?

I believe the answer is to be found in the bedrock difference between liberals and conservatives. Liberals seek to appease the envy of (what used to be called) the "lower classes" with money, flattery, and even imitation in fashions and "lifestyles." Conservatives defy the envious with tradition, force, and (most constructively) appeals to reason ("In America, you too can make it").

Jews—historically prime targets of envy—have almost always tried to pursue the first route: to con-

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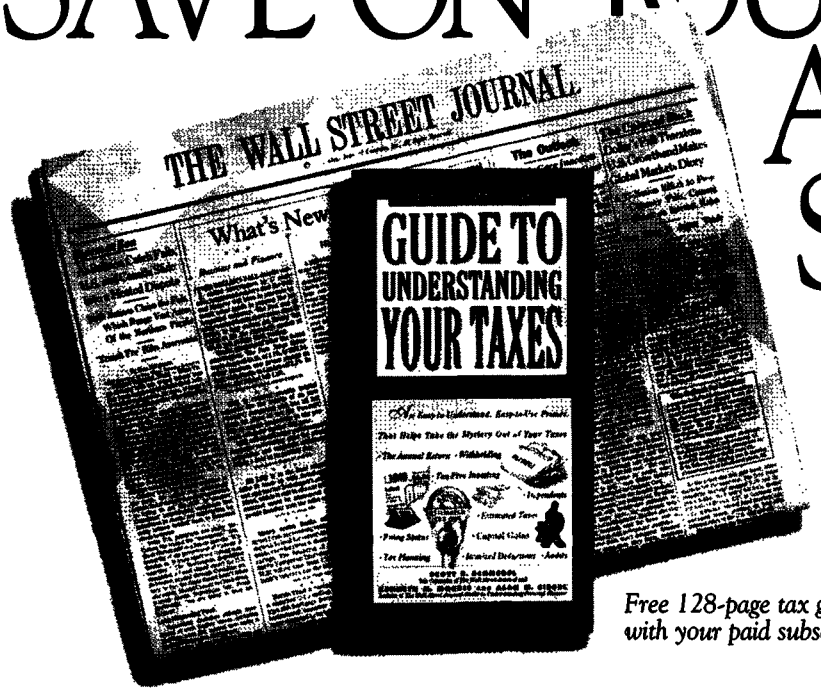

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vince their envious enemies how nice they are, how much they care, how generous they are. This approach has almost always failed, just as 60's liberalism—the latest version of envy appeasement—has failed (and cost us a bundle, too).

But while "most Americans" have wised up and joined the "counterrevolution," 81 percent of Jews are stuck in a time warp, still stubbornly believing that if they would only be nice enough, their enemies would like them: a surefire recipe for self-destruction.

ERIC JULBER
Carmel, California

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

George Jochnowitz obviously wrote his letter before the Republican party decided to take up the issue of affirmative action in a big way, and I dare say he is just as happy as I am about this development. But Mr. Jochnowitz is not quite accurate when he says that "the policies in question date from the Nixon era": in fact they were born under Lyndon Johnson. It is, however, true that, for reasons which remain obscure, at least to me, they were given a big boost by the Nixon administration and that (as documented in a number of COMMENTARY articles) they survived virtually intact under both Reagan and Bush. On this issue, as on others, the new Republican majority intends to launch a much bolder assault on the liberal heritage than Ronald Reagan did.

So far as foreign policy goes, I think Mr. Jochnowitz is too kind to President Clinton. Already the Saudis are backing away from economic cooperation with Israel, and on the diplomatic front Egypt becomes more hostile by the hour and is actually working to prevent other countries from entering into relations with Israel. In any case, the main reason Israel is less isolated today than it was in 1989 has nothing to do with the Clinton administration. It is that Israel has begun to move toward withdrawal from the occupied territories and acceptance of a Palestinian state. If Israel were now to develop second thoughts about the "peace" process, everything would change again.

I have been trying for many years to understand why American Jews are so intransigently committed to liberalism in general and the Democratic party in particular. The standard answers to this fascinating question have never fully satisfied me, and neither does Eric Julber's. But I must say that his theory is very suggestive. It also has the merit of novelty—no small achievement in discussing so exhaustively explored a problem.

National Defense

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Eliot A. Cohen's thoughtful analysis of the future of national defense ["What To Do About National Defense," November 1994] left out what may be one of our central concerns. In dealing with potential enemies, Mr. Cohen seems to assume that we would, as it were, have to face them one at a time. But this has not been the case in any of our major conflicts, including and since World War II, and is less likely to be so in the future.

In World War II we faced an alliance of major powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan. In Korea we fought a *de-facto* alliance of North Korea and China; and in Vietnam we struggled unsuccessfully against the same sort of combination of Communist powers, which of necessity limited the scale of our effort and eventually defeated us.

In the Balkans today a major cause of European (and probably American) reluctance to engage the Serbs with serious force is the obvious but little discussed fact that the Russians stand behind the Serbs and would tolerate no major effort against them without a very dangerous international escalation of the conflict. This gaping abyss tends to be papered over with much show—and praise—of so-called Russian cooperation in trying to bring "peace" to the area.

The necessity of engaging such *sub-rosa* alliances will present a major challenge to the United States in the next century. Indeed, it is already doing so, with precious little in the way of serious analysis or discussion to help meet that particular challenge. The problem tangles diplomacy and military force in a complex, unpredictable manner, and badly needs the application of intellectual and practical expertise now.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article, Eliot A. Cohen writes of "pernicious consequences" when retired officers endorse candidates for public office. But once retired from active duty, having helped defend our country in various far-off locales, haven't they earned the right to express their views? We who remain on active duty are not unduly swayed by them; they are the same fallible human beings in civilian clothes whom we knew and loved when they were in uniform.

James B. Stockdale ran for Vice President on a ticket with Ross Perot; they lost. William Westmoreland ran for governor of South Carolina and lost. Retired officers should be just as entitled to misread the public mood as any of us.

John McCain and John Glenn, both retired officers, serve in the U.S. Senate, which is a better Senate for it.

ROBERT P. FAIRCHILD
LTC, Army National Guard
Hampton, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Among other matters, Eliot A. Cohen urges that the U.S. test and develop nuclear weapons. But this myopic suggestion is inconsistent with his initial premise, that cold-war conceptions must be abandoned.

I submit that the Clinton administration should do nothing that might undermine the politico-military value and effect of missile treaties. Otherwise, Russia might be tempted to unfreeze its nuclear arsenal, produce more warheads, and oppose any further reductions in warheads. . . . Does Washington want to unsettle President Yeltsin's fledgling democracy and create additional hardship for reformers?

ELLIOTT A. COHEN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Eliot A. Cohen is quite correct in lamenting the deterioration of the military's respect for the tradition of civilian supremacy in determining and directing policy. The trauma of the Vietnam war, which lowered the American public's respect for the armed forces and corroded their self-confidence, . . . generated self-justifying excuses on the part of the military to explain why the war was lost. And it is these excuses—that the military did not have the support of the public and was denied coherent objectives by civilian policy—which have led to the problems Mr. Cohen's article brings to light.

The new contention is that the

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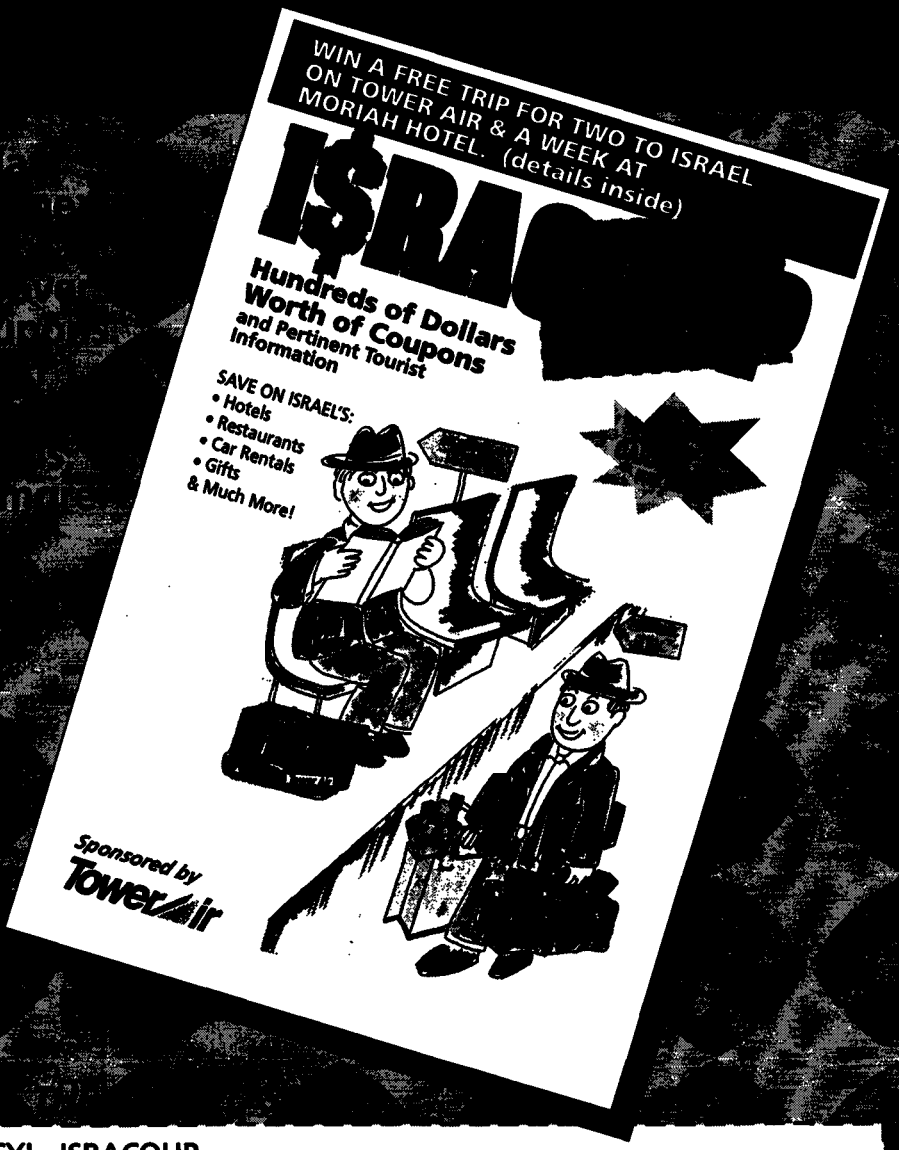

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armed forces have a right to insist upon public support and clear-cut objectives in future military operations, to decide whether or not military power should be employed, and to participate in the formation of policy. While many leaders of the armed forces claim they are still subordinate to civilian authority and still the executors of civilian policy, they now seek not only what is in effect a veto over that active authority but also a recognized and active military role in making policy. . . .

The most influential and widely-read exposition of this new, untraditional concept can be found in the book, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, by Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr. (1982). Summers's . . . conclusions have been enthusiastically received. Using quotations from the most recent English-language translation of *On War*, by the 19th-century Prussian military writer and analyst, Karl von Clausewitz, Summers concludes that the United States lost the Vietnam war because of "a lack of appreciation of military theory and military strategy, especially the relationship between military strategy and national policy." His solution for preventing further military failures is to insist upon military intrusion into the processes which determine and direct policy. . . .

Summers goes on to claim that it is the military's responsibility "to apply our military judgment to national-security issues," and asserts, "Prior to any future commitment of U.S. military forces, our military leaders must insist that the civilian leadership provide tangible, obtainable political goals." Thus, Summers believes that the military should evaluate and veto civilian policy decisions. . . .

A serious flaw in Summers's book is his frequent taking of Clausewitz's remarks out of context and tailoring them to produce meanings that Clausewitz did not intend. For example, . . . Summers claims that, according to Clausewitz, the subordination of the military to civilian authority rests upon the assumption that, "policy knows the instrument it means to use." . . . If Summers's interpretation is accurate, this would unlock the door for the justification of the military's deciding for itself whether or not to obey civilian policy. . . .

But the text of *On War* reveals that Summers has taken the quotation out of context. Clausewitz actually states:

> Subordinating the political point of view to the military would be absurd, for it is policy that has created war. Policy is the guiding intelligence and war only the instrument, not vice versa. No other possibility exists, then, than to subordinate the military point of view to the political.

Nowhere . . . in *On War* did Clausewitz contend or imply that the subordination of the military to the political leadership is conditional upon the wisdom of policy or the competence of the political leadership.

And here is the entire passage from Clausewitz (Book VIII, Chapter 6, p. 607), with the words that Summers has quoted out of context emphasized:

> It might be thought that policy could make demands on war which war could not fulfill; but that hypothesis would challenge the natural and unavoidable *assumption that policy knows the instrument it means to use.*

Summers conveniently ignores Clausewitz's further remarks (pp. 606-7):

> The question arises whether *policy* is bound to be given precedence over everything . . . [t]hat it can err, subserve the ambitions, private interests, and vanity of those in power is neither here nor there. In no sense can the art of war ever be regarded as the preceptor of policy.

And although Clausewitz did say that "political decisions" could "influence operations for the worse," he never claimed that such a possibility detracted from the primacy of policy.

Summers begins Chapter 8, "Tactics, Grand Tactics, and Strategy," with another quote from Clausewitz:

> The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.

He then declares, "As military professionals, it was our job to judge the true nature of the Vietnam war, communicate those facts to our civilian decision-makers, and to recommend appropriate strategies." And he goes on to discuss guerrilla war, counterinsurgency, revolutionary war, and conventional war as if these were the "kinds" of war Clausewitz had in mind. But a reading of the entire paragraph in context reveals that Clausewitz meant "kind of war" only in terms of how closely the purely military object of the war approached the purely political object. . . .

Thus, in *On Strategy*, Harry Summers has grossly distorted Clausewitz's intent in order to advance his own agenda of intruding the military into policy formulation.

JOSEPH FORBES
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

ELIOT A. COHEN writes:

My article contended that the United States would, for the most part, continue to operate in a coalition in the future, a point which, to some extent, meets Herb Greer's concerns. His argument is, within limits, valid—one can imagine a coalition of powers that combine to thwart the United States on particular issues—but it seems to me highly improbable that we will face the kind of two-front conflict in the next few decades that we had to cope with in World War II. There is no major power that has the resources, will, or discipline to pose anything like the challenge of Germany or Japan in World War II. As for Russia, the sorry episode in Chechnya indicates just how dismal that country's military strength is, and is likely to remain.

Robert P. Fairchild has simply missed my point. Of course retired officers have every right to participate in politics as much as they wish. We have even elected a few to the presidency (with mixed results), and perhaps will do so in the future. What was troubling in the last election, and what continues to be troubling, is the rise of the military as a formally acknowledged corporate group in American politics. For a band of retired generals and admirals to endorse a candidate is unseemly, and a step in the direction of the politicization of our military. When former Secretary of Defense Les Aspin referred to the military as a constituency that the President

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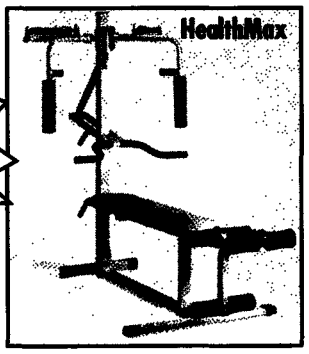

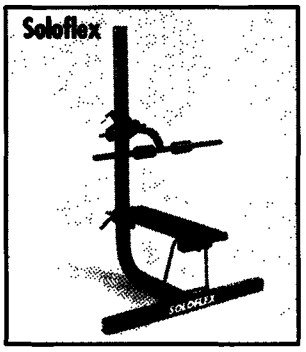

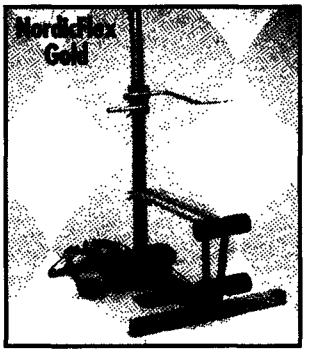

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could win, he betrayed a misguided conception of the officer corps, but one increasingly pervasive.

My namesake's clinging to the arms-control treaties of the cold war is anachronistc: both Russia and the United States have an interest in strategic defenses, and that interest will grow over time. Russia—bankrupt and chaotic as it is—is in no position to resume an arms race even if it had the desire to do so.

I am glad that Joseph Forbes agrees with my basic point, although I think he is a bit harsh on Harry Summers—an honorable and estimable veteran of this country's wars—when he does so. Summers's book made an important contribution to the revival of serious study of Clausewitz in the country's war colleges, and for that alone he deserves a great deal of credit. Ironically enough, moreover, when *On Strategy* first appeared, it upset many army officers who thought it entirely too critical of the American military.

"The Bell Curve"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Chester E. Finn, Jr. in his review of *The Bell Curve* [Books in Review, January] has done much to counterbalance the avalanche of opprobrium heaped upon the authors of the book, Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein. . . . Nevertheless, some of his statements—or omissions—merit further examination. . . .

There is no getting around the fact that the heritability of any multidetermined characteristic is always (except in monozygotic twins) partial. This, of course, follows logically from the estimate of "60 percent heritability," but more should have been made of the remaining portion, determined by "nurture." The omission is made more noxious by the authors' failure to observe (as Mr. Finn notes only in passing) that the "sifting" due to inherited capabilities is anything but highly efficient, a fact which mitigates their phenotypic effectiveness. . . .

Mr. Finn . . . nearly defeats his and the authors' purpose by attributing to them a position they never advocated, viz., that group difference should lead to inferences about individuals. Indeed, it is one of the authors' principal arguments that individuals should be assessed as such, regardless of racial or other factors. To argue otherwise would indeed justify the accusation of an ignominious racism.

We can also see that many seemingly trenchant criticisms simply miss the mark. For instance, it has been held that, since we can point to a gene which determines eye color but not to one for *g*, the latter must be a spurious construct. This is nonsense. No one would argue that *g*, if it exists—and there is good reason to assume that it does—is determined by a single gene. Indeed, its presumed genetic components are likely to be extremely complex, depending upon a network of interacting components, which could be charted only if we had a complete blueprint of the human genetic map. . . .

Lastly, can we get around the ineluctable fact that in any society, regardless of its political structure, some form of social and economic stratification will occur? The authors, in spite of their pessimism, would not deny that a stratification based upon a perhaps fortuitous mixture of intelligence, motivation, socially valued skills, and (perhaps unfortunately) certain physical traits deemed to be "attractive" will . . . ultimately determine who rises and who remains behind. This may not be "fair," but then, what is fair in life?

Apart from a monastic community, does anyone have a better idea than equal opportunity, which does not exclude the "helping hand" where needed? Call it affirmative action or whatever, it should be based on an individual's needs and merits rather than on his belonging to a particular—and often arbitrarily defined—group.

HARRY KAUFMANN
Hunter College, CUNY
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Chester E. Finn, Jr. remarks in his review that "IQ is a serviceable indicator." But an indicator of what? Mr. Finn accepts the answer given by Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein. He says IQ indicates something called "intellectual ability." Some citizens might want to question this, however. Two recent high-IQ Presidents, Nixon and Clinton, have shown that "intellectual ability" is likely to be short on the Declaration's "self-evident truths." . . .

Murray and Herrnstein report that the new high-IQ "cognitive elite" is separating itself deeply and widely from society's dregs. The elite is increasing its economic advantage. Its members effectively exclude outsiders by marrying, working, and playing only with one another. These findings arouse a worried response from the authors' fellow social scientists who are scandalized by natural inequalities they associate with "success."

But who could expect anything else? The IQ test is a measure primarily of analytical, quantitative abilities, and secondarily of compatible verbal skills. Furthermore, all the IQ tests abstract from common experiences of today to measure future possibilities imagined by what establishment education calls "higher skills." Thus, the IQ test ranks respondents on a scale which is well-adapted to the task of modernity's mathematical physics, the task of transforming a chaotic universe into life-nurturing technologies.

But what of the human "sciences"? When an IQ scale is also used for ratifying social and political elites . . . it can only encourage thoughtlessness and concentrate ever greater power in ever fewer hands.

What needs to be watched is not the authors' discovery that there is a new, unrecognized elite. After all, social science has often been jarred by such commonplaces and it always reacts with the same tiresome outrage. What needs to be watched instead is another tendency toward which *The Bell Curve* points. . . .: a tendency for citizens to defer broadly to a radically different kind of elite, an elite which threatens freedom.

Admission to the new elite is certified by our universities together with the public schools they dominate. These have recently begun to recognize IQ as the most important indicator of student admissibility, as Murray and Herrnstein point out in their book. And not surprisingly, the change in admissions policy has been motivated by a change in the curriculum. The new curriculum builds on IQ skills, arguing that they are necessary for living in an emerging world community.

More alarming is the associated political doctrine. The new curriculum is openly hostile to a representative government of separated powers. It argues that entrenched oppressors use institutions like

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these to prevent the emergence of oppressed peoples. The new curriculum prefers the intimate, direct democracy of the opponents of the Constitution, a democracy unguarded against even the most base demagoguery. It prefers a direct democracy, it claims, but only if it is watched over by a pro-technology elite-managed judiciary.

The new curriculum prefers creativity to established truths meant for all time. It prefers a soft nihilism of "value preferences" to serious moral thought. It thus undermines the ability of voters to select representatives they admire. It leaves voters without a basis for choosing their "best." If it achieves its objectives, it will bring the downfall of the only kind of popular government which is adapted to modern life: representative republicanism.

DAVID BROYLES
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

CHESTER E. FINN, JR. writes:

Insofar as Harry Kaufmann has a quarrel to pick, it seems to be more with Messrs. Murray and Herrnstein than with my review of their book. I am not sure what he has in mind when he asserts that "more should have been made" of the "nurture" portion of intelligence. Indeed, my main point of divergence from *The Bell Curve*, plainly stated in the review, is that this portion may be somewhat more malleable than the authors suggest.

Mr. Kaufmann simply misread my review if he thought I attributed to Murray and Herrnstein any inclination to make individual inferences from group averages. As I wrote, the authors "meticulously distinguish" the "fate [of individuals] from group generalizations and averages." Elsewhere in the review I said that "we cannot know whether an individual will follow, beat, or lag behind the probabilities for his intelligence range."

But I have no disagreement—nor, I believe, do Murray and Herrnstein—with Mr. Kaufmann's view that if some kind of stratification is inevitable, it should be based on individual ability rather than on group membership.

David Broyles is correct that intelligence is only one of the factors society weighs in appraising individuals. And it is legitimate to point to some recent occupants of the White House as evidence that

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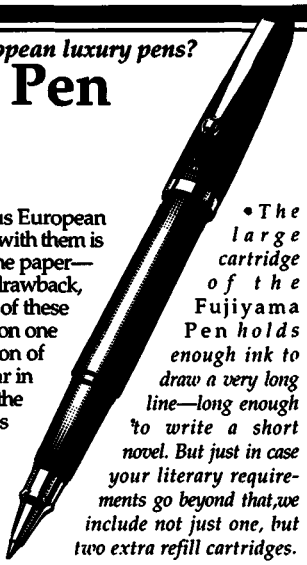

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high IQ does not necessarily make one admirable (or, in the present case, effective). Nothing in my review—or in *The Bell Curve*—suggests otherwise.

As for what Mr. Broyles terms the "new curriculum" in American universities, he has accurately taken its ideological measure. But he loses me with the assertion that IQ-based, meritocratic admissions policies are a result of that curriculum. To the contrary: the erosion of those policies in the name of affirmative action and enhanced "diversity" is what the "new curriculum" (and its faculty acolytes) point to. I have seen this up close in recent months as my son has presented himself for admission interviews at a number of medical schools. Almost without exception, someone connected with the process has said to him and his fellow applicants that of course the institution could fill its class with top-scoring candidates, but that of course it prefers to ensure an appropriate demographic blend. (It is hinted, for example, that Native American applicants would be admitted with little attention to test results.) Thus do some of our elite institutions seek to retard the ability-based stratification that Messrs. Murray and Herrnstein describe and attempt to substitute judgments based on group characteristics—precisely what many of *The Bell Curve*'s critics wrongly accuse the authors of doing! Is it any wonder that the affirmative-action issue is heating up?

Teaching

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I want to applaud Mark Gerson "In the Classroom" [January]—both as a writer and as a teacher. As a father of two young boys, I am delighted that young men of Mr. Gerson's obvious talent are alive and well and teaching. We need more history teachers and fewer point guards.

TOM PRATT
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although the two of us have, combined, 70 years' experience in elementary and higher education, we do not know what to make of Mark Gerson's article.

We each read it twice (and had others read it) to be sure that we understood Mr. Gerson's phenomenal success with minority students in a Catholic school. And since he is identified as a 1994 graduate, he apparently accomplished his feats after only a year.

His reason for success: all you need to do is win your students' respect. And you do that by showing confidence, having a moral base, and, of course, a sense of humor. That's it. We really do not know why no one thought of all this before.

Thus, Mr. Gerson tells us, while his students did not know the difference between Aristotle and Aristide, he now—presto—has them writing stories on "a day in the life of a worldly ascetic." Some progress. When they high-fived in class and talked, he once cracked a joke and, bingo, they stopped and never did it again. Wow!

When he tells them rap music is not nice, they do not blink, but take his advice and listen to Frank Sinatra. Next week, we presume, it is on to *Aida*. Incidentally, he does not tell us what he finds wrong with rap music. Some rap music is vulgar; but some reflects a serious point of view for minority students. Regardless, his students simply agree to follow his cultural leadership—which, Mr. Gerson might consider, is patronizing and condescending. Might he at least have shown enough sensitivity to recommend Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Nat King Cole, etc.? No matter, according to Mr. Gerson, his students are now happy crooning the oldies of the Chairman of the Board. And if they are now happy and have found their way, who are we to argue?

He joins them to shoot a few hoops and has more success in bonding than any Big Brother program in the history of education.

Mr. Gerson's article makes no mention of drugs, sex, or violence in and around his school. Presumably, he told his students these activities were not nice, and they agreed to follow a path of righteousness.

If anyone ever qualified to be czar of a discipline, it must be Mr. Gerson for education.

If that were not enough, he tells us that none of the teachers complains about the $15,480-a-year salary, and, moreover, institutional politics do not exist. My, oh, my.

Where is this Wonderland? Mr. Gerson uses the name St. Luke's but assures us in a footnote that "St. Luke's is not its real name." But the world should know of this place.

Please, dear COMMENTARY, tell us this article was a parody which failed in its mission. If not, then we suspect St. Luke's is a place where the scarecrow, tinman, and the lion are among the students.

BERL AND PHYLLIS FALBAUM
West Bloomfield, Michigan

MARK GERSON writes:

Why do Berl and Phyllis Falbaum consider it "insensitive" of me to choose Frank Sinatra instead of Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and the other jazz greats they mention? Though they are all excellent, in my opinion Frank Sinatra in music and Michael Jordan in basketball set the standard by which everyone else is measured. Moreover, Sinatra is from Hoboken, Jersey City's neighbor in Hudson County, and the home town of many of my students.

But to return to the charge of insensitivity, we need not play semantic games to avoid a rather obvious fact: all the names the Falbaums mention are black and Sinatra is white. So I am being blamed for not introducing my students to black jazz greats. Let me point out, first, that I have. I told my classes that the only singer who could rival Frank Sinatra is Ella Fitzgerald (her "I Love Paris" is hauntingly beautiful, while his is merely wonderful). So I play Fitzgerald along with Sinatra in detention. Furthermore, after I introduced my home room to Sinatra, the students said they wanted something else. Since I am too "sensitive" a guy to force my home-room students (who never do anything wrong) to do anything against their will, I asked for suggestions. One girl wanted "Method," a rapper. Absolutely not, I said. Another suggested Marvin Gaye, and I gladly assented. Incidentally, nowhere in my article did I claim that I had turned my students away from rap; unfortunately, I do not think I will ever be able to accomplish that. I am just trying to offer them some "diversity."

Why did I not allow "Method"? The Falbaums suggest that some rap "reflects a serious point of view for minority students." No doubt. But the problem is that the "serious point of view" it reflects is often a very bad one. What the Falbaums consider merely "vulgar" inspires revolt against authority,

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cheap sex, gross misogyny, rape, and sometimes murder. To say that this message is somehow more "serious" than listening to Frank Sinatra accompanied by Tommy Dorsey's band, is, to borrow their phrase, patronizing and condescending.

I am honored by the suggestion of the Falbaums that I should become an education czar, but I do not think I am qualified to become the czar of anything. And yes, St. Luke's succeeds in part because there is a sense of purpose and no institutional politics. That is the consequence of working hard and not expecting material rewards each step along the way. In other words, of worldly asceticism.

Finally, let me thank Tom Pratt for his generous letter.

The Peace Process

To the Editor of Commentary:

In replying last month to the letters on his "The Peace Process So Far" [December 1994], Norman Podhoretz once again expressed the fear that this process would lead not to peace but to another war. I agree. Indeed, speaking as a former adviser to Prime Ministers Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin on countering terrorism, I would say that war is even closer than Mr. Podhoretz thinks. . . .

Just a few weeks ago, at the PLO's annual celebration of "Eruption Day" (the anniversary of the start of its war with Israel 30 years ago), Yasir Arafat spoke at a public meeting in Gaza, inciting his followers to die for Allah.

"We are all seekers after martyrdom," he shouted to the huge crowd. "And I say to the martyrs who died on behalf of the martyrs who are still living: We stand by our oath and hold to our commitment . . . to continue . . . the revolution."

Arafat kept repeating that the 100-year battle which began with the first Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 is still going on, and that the Palestinian people must make more sacrifices, as in the siege of Beirut, in which 72,000 were killed or wounded; the siege of Tripoli, where 12,000 were lost; and the *intifada*, where, he said, 2,000 had been killed and 118,000 wounded.

"We hold to freedom of opinion," declared Arafat to those who were absent, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, telling them again the story of the Prophet Muhammad's temporary agreement with the tribe of Kureish. "But there are people who will not learn from history," Arafat said. "As for us, our history is our best teacher."

Again and again, under his direction, the crowd chanted the war cry now familiar to most Israelis: "We will give our soul and blood for thee, O Palestine." And Arafat, addressing the leader of Hamas (now in an Israeli jail), "our Sheikh Ahmad Yasin," declared: "Do not be discouraged. Be patient. Trust in Allah, and persevere." He also said to this audience, his people, "Blessed be your struggle, blessed be your *jihad*."

Arafat conveyed these same messages in several public gatherings on different occasions at the beginning of January. Palestinian television broadcast them to Palestinians in the Arab countries and the territories, and in Israel.

Prime Minister Rabin knows all this and more. He knows that the PLO is not trying to prevent terrorism because it sees the main perpetrators, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as a legitimate opposition, as kinsmen with whom it is ready to conduct only dialogue, not war. So instead of extraditing murderers, it recruits them to its police and protects them. (Even the Palestinian organization Al-Haq has reported this.)

Recently, a high PLO official, Nabil Sha'ath, announced that the undertaking to amend the Palestinian Covenant in order to eliminate the clauses calling for the destruction of Israel will not be honored. Neither is Arafat honoring the undertaking to punish those of his own followers who persist in violence.

Thus, for example, when the Fatah Hawks engaged in acts of terrorism, the Israeli public was told that Arafat was no longer responsible for them because they had left the PLO. It now turns out that instead of being punished, they have been honorably restored to the ranks.

Since Arafat has not disarmed anyone, a huge arsenal of personal weapons is accumulating in the hands of his "opponents" in the territories. These opponents, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, are also making every effort to prevent an internecine clash with the PLO and are ready even to overlook the few cases in which their people have been accidentally killed by Arafat's people. War must be waged only against Israel, only against the Jews.

The Rabin government is aware of all this. But whether or not it shelves the political process, we are heading back to 1947, to a fatal clash between two communities, Arab and Jewish.

If we continue with the peace process, the conflict will be longer in coming, but our situation will worsen. If we stop the process now, the situation may deteriorate more quickly, but our position will be relatively better. . . .

Yigal Carmon

Jerusalem, Israel

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School of American Ballet student performance: Merrill Ashley, Gelsey Kirkland and Colleen Neary. Copyright: Martha Swope, 1967.

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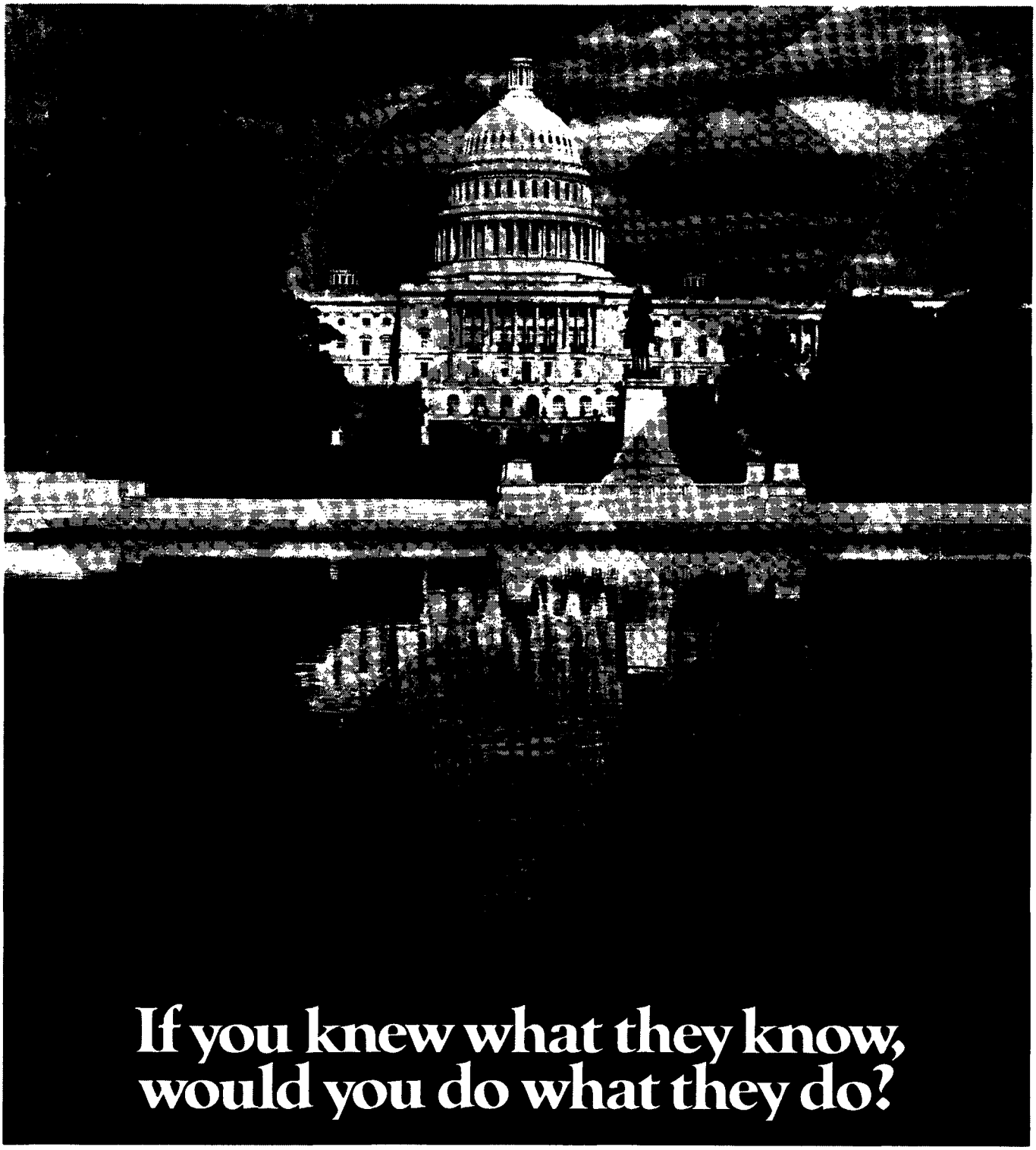

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What To Do About the Arts

Joseph Epstein

Arts that lack a particular distinction or nobility of style are often said to be styleless, and the culture is judged to be weak or decadent.

—MEYER SCHAPIRO

"Art for everyone": anyone regarding that as possible is unaware how "everyone" is constituted and how art is constituted. So here, in the end, art and success will yet again have to part company.

—ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

NOBODY with a serious or even a mild interest in the arts likes to think he has lived his mature life through a bad or even mediocre period of artistic creation. Yet a strong argument can be made that ours has been an especially bleak time for the arts.

One of the quickest ways of determining this is to attempt to name either discrete masterpieces or impressive bodies of work that have been written, painted, or composed over the past, say, 30 years. Inexhaustible lists do not leap to mind. Not only is one hard-pressed to name recent masterpieces, but one's sense of anticipation for the future is less than keen. In looking back over the past two or three decades, what chiefly comes to mind are fizzled literary careers, outrageous exhibitions and inflated (in all senses of the word) reputations in the visual arts, and a sad if largely tolerant boredom with most contemporary musical composition.

People who look to art for spiritual sustenance have been dipping into capital—they have, that is, been living almost exclusively off the past. In literature, less and less do the works created since the great American efflorescence earlier in the century seem likely to endure. (One thinks of 1925, that *annus mirabilis* for the American novel, which saw the publication of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith*, and Willa Cather's *The Professor's House.*) In visual art, the line is drawn—if not for everyone—at Abstract Expressionism, after which no powerful school or movement seems to have arisen, and so many reputations seem, as the English critic F.R. Leavis remarked in another connection, to have more to do with the history of publicity than with the history of art. In serious music, *performing* artists continue to emerge, but the music they perform is almost exclusively that of past centuries; the greatest appetite of all remains for the works created between J.S. Bach (1685-1750) and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). True, dance, under such geniuses as George Balanchine and Martha Graham, has had a fine contemporary run. But no one, I think, would argue against the proposition that the only works of art capable of stirring anything like extensive excitement in the nation just now are movies, which, given their general quality, is far from good news.

In explanation, and partially in defense, of this situation it has been suggested that we are living in a time when sensibility has been fundamentally altered; and, it is sometimes also argued, advancing technology—the computer, the video—only figures to alter it further. The artistic result of this putative shift in sensibility goes under the banner of postmodernism. Although the word means different things to different people, generally postmodernism in the arts includes the following: a belief that a large statement, in everything from poetry to architecture, is probably no longer persuasive; a self-reflexiveness, a playfulness, and a strong reliance on irony which the advocates of postmodernism find a refreshing and fair exchange for spirituality in art; and a contempt for criticism traditionally understood as the activity of making discriminations, distinctions, and, especially, value judgments.

At the same time that some argue for a change in sensibility, suggesting in turn the need for a change in the nature of art, others feel that if art is not to lose its standing entirely, more than ever it needs to give itself directly to social and political purposes. We have driven around this block before, of course, most notably in the 1930's when novelists and poets, painters, and even musicians were scolded for insufficient engagement in the political struggles of the day.

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The present article is the tenth is a series which was inaugurated in September 1994 and which will continue in the coming months.

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Then, these criticisms were directed by Communists and fellow-travelers; today they are made under the aegis of an ideology that finds its chief outlets in environmentalism, sexual liberation, a lingering anti-capitalism, and an inchoate but determined multiculturalism.

The paramount enemy for such people, then as now, is disinterested art that attempts to transcend political and other sorts of human division. This is art of the kind Marcel Proust had in mind when he wrote that it "gives us access to higher spiritual reality resembling the otherworldly metaphysical speculations of philosophy and religion." This is art which, among its other effects, seeks to broaden horizons, to deepen understanding, and to enhance consciousness as well as to convey the ultimately unexplainable but very real exaltation that is integral to heightened aesthetic pleasure.

By such measures, most contemporary art has fallen down badly on the job. Art still functions to confer social status on what today one might call the educated classes, as witness the large crowds that attend certain museum shows and operas and concerts given by performers who have been declared superstars. But high art (except the political kind) has more and more been relegated to a minority interest and is under attack for doing what it has always done best. Much of high Western art is now even judged, *mirabile dictu*, to be politically less than correct.

SOME of this might have been predicted—and, in fact, it was. More than 40 years ago, in an essay entitled "The Plight of Our Culture,"* the late Clement Greenberg wrote that "high culture has lost much of its old implicit authority." In that essay, Greenberg ran through those brutal simplicities—as he rightly called them—known as highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow.

Highbrow art, from Homer through Rembrandt to Schoenberg, had always made the greatest demands on its audience—and those demands, it had always been understood, resulted in the highest rewards, both philosophical and aesthetic. In its modern forms, highbrow art, wrote Greenberg, tended to be synonymous with avant-garde art, which made even stricter demands. Avant-garde art was often about itself, and the avant-garde artist, turning inward, was interested above all in solutions to the problems his particular art presented: problems of surface and perspective in painting, of tonality and dissonance in music, of language and depth psychology in literature.

Because of this it had become more and more difficult to admire a modern artist's work apart from his technique. As Greenberg had put it in an earlier essay, as the avant-garde became highly specialized, so "its best artists [became] artists' artists, its best poets, poets' poets," and this, not surprisingly, had "estranged a great many of those who were capable formerly of enjoying and appreciating ambitious art and literature, but who are now unwilling or unable to acquire an initiation into these craft secrets."

Lowbrow art presented no difficulties of definition: it was mass art, produced for and aimed at the lowest common denominator, and promising nothing more than entertainment. But then there was middlebrow art, where the problems, for Greenberg and others, arose. Middlebrow art promised both to entertain and to educate, and attempted to pass itself off as highbrow by its appearance of seriousness. Yet the middlebrow was not finally serious; it was instead merely earnest, which was not at all the same thing. Middlebrow art was always teaching, if not preaching. (In our own time, it has been chiefly preaching political lessons.) And middlebrow art was responsible for deploying one of the most self-serving myths of our age, the myth of the artist as a permanent rebel against society.

Writing in a special issue of the British magazine *Horizon* in 1947, Greenberg called for a frankly highbrow elite that would help bring about an art characterized by "balance, largeness, precision, enlightenment." We have had, he wrote, "enough of the wild artist." What we need now are

> men of the world not too much amazed by experience, not too much at a loss in the face of current events, not at all overpowered by their own feelings, men to some extent aware of what has been felt elsewhere since the beginning of recorded history.

NEARLY a half-century later, all one can say of Clement Greenberg's aspirations for art is that none of them has come into being, whereas most of his worst fears have. Middlebrow art is taken so much for highbrow in our day that the very category of highbrow is in doubt. My own personal, shorthand definition of a middlebrow is anyone who takes either Woody Allen or Spike Lee seriously as an artist. And most of the country, it will not have gone without notice, does.

One of the consequences of the debasement of art is that fewer and fewer people are able to make the important distinctions which high art itself requires for its proper appreciation. An institution that has played a large role in bringing this situation about is the university. Formerly free from the tyranny of the contemporary—the tyranny, that is, of being up to the moment—the university now takes great pride in being a center for the creation of contemporary art. Over the past three or four decades, the university has become something akin to a continuing WPA program by furnishing an ever-larger number of

* COMMENTARY, June 1953.

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artists—chiefly writers but painters and musicians, too—with jobs.

This might not be so bad, but, with all these artists on hand, the university now also provides a fairly strong diet of contemporary fare in its curriculum. Once, it was not thought necessary to teach the works of contemporary writers, painters, and composers; if a student was a reasonably cultivated person, or had the desire to be such a person, he could learn about such things on his own. No more. Some artists even teach themselves.

Although many universities continue to offer traditional subjects in the arts, the university has, at the same time, caved in to the demand for courses that fit the politics of a large number of the people who teach there: feminism, Marxism, Lacanism, the new historicism, deconstructionism, semiotics—"the six branches of the School of Resentment," as the literary critic Harold Bloom has called them. Thus, in the contemporary university literature and painting are often put through the meat grinder of race, class, and gender. This is well-known. What is perhaps less well-known is the odd way it has skewed the arts themselves.

To give an example of how the skewing works, the week before President Clinton's inauguration I was called by the (London) *Daily Telegraph* for my opinion of the poet Maya Angelou, who had been chosen to read a poem at the inaugural. I told the reporter that I had no opinion of Maya Angelou, for I had read only a few of her poems and thought these of no great literary interest. Ah, he wondered, did I know anyone who might have an opinion that would be interesting to English readers? I conceded that I knew of no one who read her. When asked how that might be, I responded that what the reporter had to understand was that in the United States just now there were a number of authors who were not actually for reading but only for teaching, of whom Angelou, who herself teaches, lectures for vast fees, and probably has more honorary degrees than James Joyce had outstanding debts, is decidedly one.

By teaching so many contemporary writers and simultaneously laying itself open to the political aspirations of multiculturalism, the university has had a serious hand in helping to discard the idea of standards, which is absolutely essential to high art. The politics of many university teachers have played a key role in this, with the result that today we no longer have in force the only distinction in the arts that really matters—that between the good and the bad, the well-made and the shoddy. Once one starts playing this particular game, the essential, the only really relevant, fact becomes not the quality of an artist's work but which category it fits into: black composers, women painters, gay/lesbian poets, and the rest of the multicultural mélange.

All but a handful of people who currently work in the arts—writers, painters, musicians, arts administrators, and patrons—seem to go along with this program. Multiculturalization has for many seemed a way out of the wrenching dilemma of wishing to seem as democratic as possible while knowing in one's heart that serious art is nothing if not thoroughly meritocratic and, in the best sense, finally and irremediably elitist.

"In art the ideal critical ethic is ruthlessness," wrote the music critic Ernest Newman. "The practice of art should not be made easier for the weaklings; it should be made harder, so that only the best types survive." Such notions are troubling to people of tender liberal conscience. The arts are now somehow construed to carry the message that they are themselves a means to progress, and progress implies encouraging the downtrodden; clearly, the last thing such people want to be caught acknowledging is that the arts are not—at least not necessarily—for everyone.

THE misguided belief that art is one of the forms that progress takes is connected with the notion that the avant-garde itself is a kind of movement, or party, for progess—an appealing notion for people who wish the arts to do things they were never meant primarily to do: to fight censorship, to give groups pride in what is called their "identity," to increase the awareness of AIDS, to fight inequities of every kind. As Clausewitz said that war was diplomacy carried on by other means, so art is seen as social justice and political enlightenment carried on by other means.

The avant-garde of an earlier time, beginning in the 1890's and proceeding through the early decades of the 20th century—the "banquet years" of French painting, music, and writing—was (again) an avant-garde of technique. It was impelled by a spirit of experimentation; it attempted to provide fundamentally new ways of seeing, hearing, and understanding: post-impressionism, atonal music, stream of consciousness, and free verse were names given to some of these experiments. Whether or not one admires the results, the utter seriousness as well as the aesthetic purity of the enterprise cannot be mistaken.

The practitioners of what must now somewhat oxymoronically be called the old avant-garde were true revolutionaries. They wished to—and often did—change the way we intuit and understand and feel about the world around us. They *truly* altered sensibility. For a complex of reasons, their revolution has been halted. While new experiments in style and technique continue, the avant-garde has largely turned away from technique and toward content.

Obscenity, homoerotic exhibitionism, sadomasochism, political rage—these have been the hallmarks of the advanced art of our day. In a way never intended either by Matisse, whose early

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paintings so upset the Parisian audience, or by Stravinsky, whose *The Rite of Spring* caused its audience to bust up chairs in the hall in which it was performed, the avant-garde artists of our day are knocking themselves out to be outrageous. An avant-garde magazine puts a woman's vagina on its cover and runs the tag line, "Read My Lips"; child pornography, if set out "tastefully," is not thought beyond the bounds of respectability; neither is a production of *Tannhäuser* with the title character as a TV evangelist and Venus as a hooker. If the political revolutionaries of an earlier day cried, "Burn, baby, burn!," the artistic revolutionaries of ours exclaim, "Squirm, baby, squirm!"

The targets for such art, it ought to be clear, are middle-class respectability, the family, heterosexuality, organized religion, and finally high culture itself. The aesthetic standard by which this art asks to be judged is the degree to which it succeeds in hitting its targets. As a panel for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) once put it, a work that is "challenging and disturbing . . . precisely . . . shows us that it is worthy of consideration." The more outrageous the art, the more worthy of notice and protection.

Consider by contrast how T.S. Eliot, a great avant-garde poet himself, saw the role of the artist:

> The artist is the only genuine and profound revolutionist, in the following sense. The world always has, and always will, tend to substitute appearance for reality. The artist, being always alone, being heterodox when everyone else is orthodox, is the perpetual upsetter of conventional values, the restorer of the real. . . . His function is to bring back humanity to the real.

Yet the contemporary, putatively avant-garde artist is neither alone nor heterodox. He is today almost invariably part of a larger group—a feminist, a gay liberationist, or a spokesman for an ethnic or racial group—and his thought, far from being heterodox, is, within both his own group and what is called the "artistic community," more rigidly conformist than a Big Ten sorority. He is published in the fashionable magazines, exhibited by the toniest galleries, awarded Pulitzers and other prizes, given federal grants, and generally rewarded and revered.

The politicizing of art, setting it on the side of all the politically-correct causes, has rendered it more acceptable even as it has become less artistic. A commercially successful painter named David Salle, a man with a good feel for the ideological winds, was quoted last year in the *New Yorker* apropos the politics of contemporary artists:

> Because in art-politics to be homosexual is, *a priori*, more correct than to be heterosexual. Because to be an artist is to be an outsider, and to be a gay artist is to be a double outsider. That's the correct condition. If you're a straight artist, it's not clear that your outsiderness is legitimate. I know this is totally absurd, that I'm making it sound totally absurd. But the fact is that in our culture it does fall primarily to gays and blacks to make something interesting. Almost everything from the straight white culture is less interesting, and has been for a long time.

How could we possibly get into a condition in which what David Salle says, absurd as it assuredly is, can nonetheless be taken as axiomatic truth? We did it by accepting the quite false notion of the artist as an outsider and extending it to the point where the farther "outside" one represents oneself as being, and the more victimized, the greater one's standing as an artist.

I first came across the name of the dancer Bill T. Jones in an article in the *New York Times Magazine*, where he was described as the "HIV-positive son of migrant workers," which, in current *New York Times*-speak, means a man beyond any possible criticism. Recently Jones and what he represents have come in for some trenchant comment in, of all places, the *New Yorker*, a magazine where only a few weeks earlier he had been the subject of a fawning profile. Arlene Croce, the magazine's distinguished dance critic, wrote a powerful piece demurring from the general celebration and entering the opinion that "the cultivation of victimhood by institutions devoted to the care of art is a menace to all art forms, particularly performing-art forms."*

Croce's article, "Discussing the Undiscussable," takes up the question of how the art of victimhood—so depressing, so manipulative, so intimidating, and ultimately so uncriticizable—has risen to such a high place in contemporary culture. She understands that some of its appeal is a combination of false empathy and real snobbery on the part of its audience: "There's no doubt that the public likes to see victims, if only to patronize them with applause." But she makes the larger—and, I think, valid—point that the behavior of government, specifically through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), has had a great deal to do with the situation she deplores.

In 1984 I was appointed a member of the National Council of the National Endowment for the Arts, a body on which I sat for six years. One of the most impressive moments I can recall from my years on the Council was when the director of the music program mentioned that a particular orchestra had had its grant reduced by something like $20,000 because of some "spotty playing in the cello section." I was much taken with how the NEA music panelists were able to pin down this fault, by the

* See Terry Teachout's "Victim Art," COMMENTARY, March 1995, for a discussion of the Croce article and the controversy it provoked.—ED.

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professionalism with which they went about the task of judgment. It seemed to me the way things ought to operate.

But outside certain select programs at the NEA, they seldom did. By the end of my term, every member on the Council had been appointed under either the Reagan or the Bush administrations—and yet, despite this, the reigning spirit in the room, as among the staff of the Endowment generally, was preponderantly liberal-Left. Time and again, when arguments about standards and quality came up against what was taken to be democratic fairness and sensitivity to minorities, the latter inevitably won the day.

How could it be otherwise? Given our debased standards, how could one hope to make the hard professional judgments about modern painting or sculpture or literature, let alone mixed-media works? The chief problem with "the peer-panel system," as it was reverently called at the NEA—a system in which artists were asked to sit in judgment of other artists in their field—was that the sort of people who served on these panels were the same sort of people who applied for and received grants themselves. Like was giving money to like.

I could not help noticing, too, the special obligation which the people who worked at the NEA felt toward what passed for avant-garde or "cutting-edge" art. The cutting edge, almost invariably, was anti-capitalist, anti-middle-class, anti-American, the whole-earth catalogue of current antinomianism. What was new was that the artists who wanted to seem cutting edge also wanted the government they despised to pay for the scissors.

Most people at the NEA and on its Council thought this a perfectly workable arrangement. If someone ever suggested that a grant application had all the earmarks of something too obviously political as well as boring beyond excruciation, the air would crackle with potential accusations of censorship and Cassandra-like warnings about slippery slopes heading into McCarthyism.

Those NEA grants that issued in obscenity and horror—Karen Finley smearing her nakedness with chocolate, Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of men with plumbing and other appurtenances up their rectums, a man spreading his HIV-positive blood on paper towels and then sending them skimming over an audience—have given the Endowment its most serious problems in the press and on Capitol Hill. Yet the NEA's defenders are correct in saying that these comprise only a minuscule proportion of the Endowment's total grants. What they do not say—possibly because they are themselves unaware of it—is how mediocre have been so many of the artists who have received NEA grants.

Mediocrity, the question of what may be called quality control, was rarely discussed during my time at the NEA. It could not be. Most NEA panelists believed in encouraging the putatively disadvantaged more than they believed in art itself, and this made them prey to the grim logic of affirmative action. (Even the panels themselves were put together on an affirmative-action basis.) Add to this the assumption at the NEA that artists themselves were yet another downtrodden minority group, as "entitled" to their grants as other supposed victims. And then toss in plain old-fashioned politics in the form of Congressmen and members of the Council who wanted to make sure that, say, Florida and Colorado got their share of grants. What we had was a fine recipe for spreading artistic mediocrity across the country.

Viewed from the middle distance of a seat on the NEA Council, the grants to individual artists seemed small potatoes. Most were for less than $20,000—an award which generally encouraged self-congratulation and the continued production of unnecessary art. What drained the spectacle of triviality was that the money was not "ours" to give away. No one felt too badly about this, for the NEA budget, generally hovering around $170 million, was, as government spending went, just above the level of walking-around money. Still, the spectacle was more than a little depressing.

THE question of what is now to be done about the arts and arts policy in America is not one that admits of easy or persuasive answers. It is made all the more complicated once one concedes how hard it is to explain what, in any society, actually encourages the production of great art.

Traditions help immensely. In 18th- and 19th-century Vienna, the pressure of strong musical traditions along with a system of monarchical patronage played a part in fostering the magnificent music of that era. The splendid efflorescence of painting in 19th- and early-20th-century France can also be partially understood through the role played by French artistic traditions—and the reactions of artists to and against certain of those traditions. But how does one explain Russian literature in the 19th century, except to say that in Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Chekhov, God chose to create six geniuses who happened to share a geography and a language?

Since genius can never be predicted, one looks to institutions that might encourage art to set out in directions likely to be more rewarding than those of the past few decades. What, today, might such institutions be?

The first that comes to mind is criticism. Critics of the arts have traditionally functioned as gatekeepers, deciding what meets the mark and passes through and what does not and is therefore excluded. Some critics have also taken a much more active hand, preparing the ground for the acceptance of new and difficult art through explication and the main force of their authority. One thinks of Edmund Wilson who in

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Axel's Castle (1931) did just this for modernist literature, and, two decades later, of Clement Greenberg who did something similar for Abstract Expressionism.

Critics of this power are not on the scene today. Nor are there important movements in the arts that require such skills. Today our critics commonly function as doormen—or, more precisely, as cheerleaders. Their job often consists in justifying the trivial, vaunting the vapid. Yet they seem quite happy in their work.

In part this derives from the fact that, like so many of our artists, many of our critics too are not merely university-trained but university-employed. As such they participate in the culture that has dominated academic life over the past few decades: they tend to disbelieve in the possibility of disinterested art; they condone the new multiculturalism and are willing to lower standards to make way for it; they are dubious about judgments of value; and they understand that "criticism" of the work of minority-group members, feminists, or homosexuals must be restricted to praise.

Criticism, then, is not an institution that can be counted on to help revive the arts of our age or in any serious way to arrest their decline—at least not for now. There are a few serious critics on the scene, but the best they can do is continue to remark that the emperor has very few clothes, and wears them badly.

Private foundations, on which many people in the arts depend, are also less than likely to help, for they, too, are hostage to the notion that art ought to be socially useful—that it is most relevant and vibrant when in the service of "social justice." The Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund is fairly typical in this regard. Consider its program for resident theaters. According to the Fund, money for such theaters should be used

> to expand their marketing efforts, mount new plays, broaden the ethnic make-up of their management, experiment with color-blind casting, increase community-outreach activity, and sponsor a variety of other programs designed to integrate the theaters into their communities.

Other major foundations—Rockefeller, Ford, MacArthur—are not differently disposed. All are committed to art for almost anything but art's sake.

That leaves the institutional linchpin of the arts in the United States, the National Endowment, now under fire from a Republican-controlled Congress. Supporters of the NEA, those who like the system as it now is, talk a good deal about the economic soundness of federal support for the arts. They trot out the following numbers: federal support for the arts costs the taxpayer only 64 cents a year, whereas the figure in Germany is $27 and in France and Canada it is $32. Every dollar awarded by the NEA in grants attracts $11 from state and local arts agencies, corporations, and private parties. There are 1.3 million jobs in the arts; if you add tourism, ticket revenues, and other money-making activities, this creates something like $37 billion in economic activity and brings in $3.4 billion in federal taxes. The arts, the argument goes, are good for the economy. So shut up, and eat your arts.

Not only have other nations throughout history supported the arts, NEA publicists maintain, but future generations will judge us by the extent to which we support the arts as "the finest expression of the human condition." (Ah, Mapplethorpe! Ah, humanity!) When, they remind us, Congress established the NEA in 1965, it noted:

> An advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future.

The arts, therefore, are not only good for the economy, they serve the purposes of moral uplift. So shut up and eat your arts.

To hear its advocates tell it, the NEA enriches community life, stimulates local economies, supports the promising young, makes culture available to the masses, works with "at-risk" youth, satisfies a deep demand for art among the American people—the NEA is in fact good for everything but growing hair. The arts are good for the city, good for the country, good for everyone. So shut up and eat your arts.

But—aside from all these magnificent side-effects—what, exactly, do the arts *do*? Here we return to the same old litany. Paul Goldberger, the cultural-news editor of the *New York Times*, a paper that has a great deal to say about what in contemporary art gets serious attention, answered the question by writing that "what art strives to do . . . is not to coddle but to challenge." In other words, painters who mock your religion, playwrights who blame you for not doing enough for AIDS, poets who exalt much that you despise, opera composers who make plain that your politics are vicious—all this is by definition art, and, whether you like it or not, it is good for you. So go eat your arts out.

The NEA might have been spared much anguish if someone truly knowledgeable had been in a position of leadership. But in its 30-year history, it has never had a chairman with anything approaching an understanding of the arts. The specialty of Nancy Hanks, the first chairman, was charming Congressmen to support the agency it had founded in 1965. Her successor, Livingston Biddle, was a platitudinarian, who to this day likes

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to expatiate on his slogan that "the arts mean excellence"; one need only listen to him for two minutes to cease believing in art and excellence both. Biddle was followed by Frank Hodsoll, an intelligent and capable civil servant who, when it came to the arts, was clearly learning on the job. John Frohnmayer, the Bush administration's man, brought to the job enormous ambition exceeded only by ignorance of the ways of politicians and artists alike. The current chairman, Jane Alexander, an actress and hence technically an artist herself, has been running a rescue operation; she apparently thinks the way to do this is to talk about her wide travels in which she finds that the people of the United States could not be happier with all the art the federal government has helped to pay for, and to remind everyone that the arts are good for our souls.

One cannot but wonder what it might be like to have someone in a position of leadership who knows what the point of the arts is. But who of any standing would want to take on the job? In the current political climate, he would find himself locked between radical artists shouting censorship and conservative Congressmen crying obscenity. His efforts could only come to grief.

THAT the future of the National Endowment for the Arts is in peril ought not to be surprising. What people at the NEA and those who accept grants from it have never seemed to realize is that they are sponsoring and producing *official* art, just as surely as the academic painters in France or the socialist-realist novelists in the Soviet Union produced official art. That our official art is against the society that sponsors it does not make it any the less official. But given the obscenity and the mediocrity and the politicization of so much of this art, government sponsorship of it has come to seem intolerable, and there is now talk of closing down the Endowment.

Should that be done? Any serious scrutiny of the NEA must begin with the stipulation that politically motivated art ought not to be underwritten by taxpayer money. (The argument that all art is ultimately political is greatly exaggerated; it is a question of degree, and everyone knows it.) Nor for their part should artists upon receiving a grant be asked to accept any condition that will inhibit them, such as not offending any segment of the population. Since these criteria cannot be satisfied in the case of grants to individual artists, and especially those on the "cutting edge," my own sense is that it would better if all such grants were eliminated: better for the country and, though they are likely to hate it, better, finally, for artists.

In one of his essays the eminent cultural historian Jacques Barzun makes a distinction between "public art" and all other kinds. Individual artists, he believes, should fend for themselves, as artists have always done; I agree with him. But then there is public art, by which Barzun means museums, opera houses, orchestras, theaters, and dance troupes. "If as a nation," he writes, "we hold that high art is a public need, these institutions deserve support on the same footing as police departments and weather bureaus."

William F. Buckley, Jr. has supplied a corroborating argument derived, for conservatives, from the most impressive of all possible sources. It was Adam Smith who, in Buckley's words, "counseled that free societies are obliged to contribute state funds only for the maintenance of justice, for the common defense, and for the preservation of monuments." It is only a small stretch, Buckley suggests, to claim that a great many artistic works qualify as monuments.

I agree with that, too—but only in theory. In a different political-cultural climate—less confrontational and litigious—one could easily imagine a place for a federal presence in the arts. The government could contribute to preserving art: it could help to maintain the costs of museums in financial difficulty and ease the financial strain entailed in the performance and exhibition of established and often difficult art that does not figure to have a wide following. Some valuable art cannot realistically hope to survive in the marketplace, ever, and some of the good things the NEA historically helped to do are not likely to be done by private philanthropy—bringing in art from abroad, underwriting costly exhibition catalogues, helping small but serious local musical and dance groups get under way. There are other things, too, that the federal government would perhaps be in the best position to accomplish, if the political climate were not so deliberately abrasive.

Proponents of the NEA point to the fact that most West European governments do support the arts, without great tumult, for the perfectly legitimate reason that they feel a responsibility to their national cultural heritage and to culture generally. But there would not have been a great tumult in the United States, either, if the NEA's advocates, artists' lobbying groups, and artists themselves had not felt the need to justify the mediocre, the political, and the obscene. These justifications have even extended to the argument that *not* to receive an NEA grant is to be the victim of censorship. When Karen Finley and other performance artists were denied an NEA grant in 1990, they took their case to the courts on this basis, and won. As long as such things go on—and there is no reason to believe that they will not—the federal government would do better to remain outside the arts altogether.

When the abolition of the NEA is currently discussed, many people talk about turning the task over to the states. But the effect of this would most likely be to enlarge state bureaucracies, and art selected for support on the state level is likely

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to be even more mediocre, and no less political, than that selected on the federal level. The prospect of "devolution" is thus not one that ought to fill anyone with optimism.

It does, however, seem doubtful that, if government divorces itself from the arts, private philanthropy will pick up the whole tab. People who run large artistic institutions—museums, symphony orchestras—seem to agree that the new generations of the wealthy have shown themselves less generous than their forebears: the philanthropic impulse is not, evidently, a genetic one.

This is unfortunate. Although money has its limitations in the arts, there is no question that it also has its distinct uses. In my own time on the NEA Council I sensed that if an art was weak, there was nothing that the injection of money—which was finally all the NEA or any federal program had to offer—could do to strengthen it. If, on other hand, an art was strong, as dance was in the middle 1980's, money could help in small but real ways to support it in its vibrancy. Many dancers, for example, work a 26-week season, or less, and hence are unemployed half the year; and, in a profession that almost guarantees injury, few dance companies are able to offer health insurance. Although nothing was done to rectify either of these situations during even the palmiest days at the NEA, the answer in both instances was fairly simple—money.

Other things that seem eminently justifiable are also not likely to be picked up by private philanthropy. The NEA has sent dance and theatrical and musical groups into rural and backwater parts of the country, so that people, and especially the young, could have an opportunity to see live performance, which, even in a television age, has its own magic. Arts education in the lower grades, which has been gradually yet seriously slipping in recent decades, is something that needs attending to. Private philanthropy is unlikely to step in here, too.

All that having been said, however, it still remains the case that if the Endowment were shut down, the arts would probably for the most part not be drastically affected. In some instances, fresh patrons would step forward to fill the financial gaps; in others, cutbacks in production and exhibition schedules would have to be made; in a minor number of cases, smaller institutions—literary magazines, design projects, local music groups—might go under. But much as the NEA and its advocates would like everyone to think otherwise, the presence of the Endowment is not crucial to the artistic life of this country. This may be a good time to lie low and have no arts policy whatsoever. After all, we had an artistic life—a much richer and more distinguished one—before we had an NEA.

Thanks in part to the NEA, we are now in an age of artistic surfeit. To provide only a single depressing statistic, I read somewhere that there are currently 26,000 registered poets in the United States. Where, it will be asked, do they register? With the Associated Writing Programs, I gather, which are chiefly made up of teachers of writing, who are even now busy producing still more poets, who will go on to teach yet more poets, who will . . . so that in twenty years' time we will have 52,000 registered poets. Degas, more than a century ago, remarked: "We must discourage the arts." What might he say today?

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Bosnia: Is It Too Late?

Yes: *Patrick Glynn*
No: *Eugene V. Rostow*

Many people, including a number who—like PATRICK GLYNN*—formerly supported at least some degree of armed intervention into the war in Bosnia by the United States and its NATO allies, and who continue to see that war as an act of Serbian aggression, have by now concluded that such a policy would at this point do more harm than good.* EUGENE V. ROSTOW *is among those who strongly disagree with this position, arguing that there is still a chance to do what they believe we should have done from the beginning in response to the Serbian aggression.*

Mr. Glynn, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War. *Mr. Rostow is Sterling Professor of Law and Public Affairs, Emeritus, Yale University and Distinguished Research Professor of Law and Diplomacy, National Defense University. His most recent book is* Toward Managed Peace *(Yale University Press), and is the first of three planned volumes on the foundations of American foreign policy.*

Patrick Glynn: Almost no one doubts today that Bosnia has been a moral failure, for America and for the West. To have recognized this tiny republic as a sovereign state while denying it the means to defend itself—and to have stood by essentially passively as rampaging Serbs pursued a brutal war of aggression against their Muslim neighbors—these are sins of commission and omission for which both Europe and America must share the blame.

There was a time, as some of us once urged, when limited, relatively low-risk actions—a lifting of the arms embargo against the Bosnian government, a supply of arms, and a well-targeted use of NATO air power—might have been sufficient to curtail the Serbian program of "ethnic cleansing" and create the basis for a tense but sustainable peace in Bosnia. That time, however, is long past.

Today, unfortunately, it is no longer possible to talk about a simple lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia. The fact is that over the past two years, the situation on the ground—and in the politics surrounding the crisis—has fundamentally changed. Any attempt to reshape conditions in Bosnia at this late stage will require as a first step the insertion of tens of thousands of NATO and U.S. ground troops in the Balkans to remove the UN peacekeeping forces now stationed there. What we face, in other words, is no longer a range of limited, low-risk options. The choice we confront is rather one between the admittedly inadequate policies of the present and a full-scale U.S. intervention involving not only enormous risks and costs, but very uncertain prospects of success.

In international affairs, as in life, timing is everything. Between August 1992, when the first reports surfaced of Muslims perishing in Serbian concentration camps, until the end of the Bush administration, the United States had ample scope and power to act in Bosnia. Public opinion was deeply engaged by the suffering of the Muslims and the moral outrage of mass murder in the heart of Europe. America's international prestige and military credibility under George Bush were at a high point. Serbs both in Bosnia and Belgrade worried hard about the possibility of U.S. intervention. And Bosnia's ill-armed forces, while beleaguered, maintained a semblance of control over major population centers in the predominantly Muslim regions of the country.

During this period, I numbered among the most vocal advocates of limited but timely ac-

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tion,* including a lifting of the arms embargo and selective use of air power against Serb forces—but never the insertion of American ground troops.

Since then, however, all has changed. Public opinion has become numbed to the suffering in Bihac and Sarajevo. Bush has been succeeded by a President lacking credibility in defense and foreign affairs. Serbs have become emboldened by a series of half-measures and empty threats from Western leaders. And Bosnia's now somewhat better-armed government forces, while fighting on, have essentially lost control of their major population centers, which remain under the nominal protection of lightly armed UN peacekeeping troops.

In a sense, of course, one key to the problem of Bosnia has been, and continues to be, the UN presence. Ironically, when the first contingent of UN troops arrived in Sarajevo in the summer of 1992, they were greeted as heroes and saviors, the first hope the besieged city had experienced in weeks. And indeed, whatever the failures or sins of the UN mission in Bosnia, it has been responsible for a measure of order-keeping and the provision of humanitarian relief, without which the Bosnian civilian population would almost certainly have faced extermination. It is a fact, as defenders of the UN mission often state, that over the past three years the level of violence in Bosnia has greatly declined, owing partly of course to Serb satiation, but also to measures taken by NATO in conjunction with the UN. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the presence of the UN forces has operated from the start as the chief barrier to more decisive military action on behalf of the newly constituted Bosnian state.

WHETHER it was a mistake to send UN peacekeepers to Bosnia in the summer of 1992 will be left for historians to debate. Certainly, no other direct military action on behalf of beleaguered Bosnia was seriously contemplated in any major capital at the time, least of all in Washington. But once UN troops had arrived in Bosnia they became a serious factor to be dealt with in any proposed solution to the crisis; they have become even more so today.

The critical issue concerns the safety not merely of the UN peacekeepers themselves, but of the civilian populations now under their protection. In February 1994, Sarajevo was on the verge of strangulation; a few weeks later, Gorazde was ready to fall. Bosnian government forces, in short, were losing the ability to defend their major population centers. It was in this period, through a combination of coercive air power and diplomacy, and amid many disputes between NATO and the UN, that a measure of security was purchased for the so-called UN "safe areas," including not only Sarajevo but such Bosnian towns as Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Srebrenica, and Bihac.

At present, the safety of the civilians in these major population centers of Bosnia, though admittedly uncertain, depends entirely upon the thin blue line of the UN presence. In the wake of a major, and probably ill-advised, Muslim offensive this past summer, Bihac has already come under heavy counterattack by the Serbs. Absent UN guarantees and troops, the rest of these population centers would inevitably be subject to renewed, intensified offensives by Serb forces, and most would almost certainly fall.

Those who have advocated a precipitous withdrawal of the UN contingent from Bosnia, like Senator William Cohen of Maine, as well as those who have advocated such a withdrawal followed by a unilateral U.S. abrogation of the arms embargo, like Senate majority leader Robert Dole, have tended to downplay or simply ignore the enormous risks that such a rash action would pose to U.S. and NATO troops responsible for effecting this withdrawal. If the U.S. lifts the arms embargo, American servicemen and women would arrive on the ground in Bosnia not as representatives of an ostensibly neutral international force, but as allies of one of the belligerents in the war. The likelihood of attacks on American troops—not slight in any case—would vastly increase. (American troops could conceivably be sent in smaller numbers to the Balkans anyway, to assist in withdrawing UN peacekeepers from Croatia.)

Beyond all this, a host of rudimentary military questions about executing the lifting of the embargo remain unanswered, or even, in some cases, unasked. First, and most urgent, is the question of how civilians in the UN safe areas will be protected once UN troops are removed. Here air power is often brought forth as a panacea.

To be sure, there is much that can be done with air power, including attacks on Serbian weapons caches, bridges, supply lines, and large, exposed pieces of equipment. But most experts agree that air power alone cannot halt a land advance. Bosnia's Serbs have stockpiled vast quantities of weapons and ammunition; it will be impossible to destroy all of them. And when it comes to close air support, planners and pilots will have to cope with mountainous, often heavily forested terrain, iffy weather, and the grave risk of collateral civilian casualties. Then there is the simple practical issue of when the U.S. air campaign would begin—after American troops have departed, or while they are still on the ground and vulnerable? This is to say nothing of the dollar cost of such potentially massive air operations.

There are other, all-too-basic questions to be addressed. How, in fact, do we plan to supply arms

* See my "The Age of Balkanization," COMMENTARY, July 1993.

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to the Bosnians? Some major U.S. ground presence in Croatia, if not in Bosnia itself, will certainly be necessary. Do we wish to be deeply involved with, and dependent upon, Croatia in this undertaking, given the authoritarian predilections and poor human-rights record of its government? Will we have to send U.S. advisers to Bosnia to train Bosnian forces in the use of the arms? If we fly Bosnian troops to some third-country location for training, will there not be a rather long lag between the lifting of the embargo and any positive effects on the battlefield? If we supply high-tech weaponry, is it not a certainty that some of it will find its way into the hands of some of the Bosnian Muslims' less savory allies-of-convenience in the Middle East?

It is also worth remembering the basic strategic point that Bosnian forces, albeit better-armed, will have not simply the task of defending terrain but the enormous, perhaps ultimately impossible, task of retaking Bosnia's population centers against well-motivated and well-armed Serb defenders—unless of course U.S. troops have somehow assumed responsibility for the protection of the safe areas in the interim.

HERE the question raised so often at the Pentagon these days resonates: *what if it doesn't work?* What if, having made Bosnia America's cause, and having completely engaged American air power and prestige, we discover that the Bosnian government army is failing to gain or even is losing ground? How deeply are we willing to go in our involvement? Bombing Serbia proper? Bombing Belgrade? Sending troops to fight side by side with Bosnians? There is a potential Vietnam-like logic to this involvement, which promises to take us deeper and deeper into war without necessarily providing victory in the end.

The problem is certain to be compounded by the condition of acute, truly unprecedented, diplomatic isolation in which we would undertake this great effort. Rightly or wrongly, Britain and France adamantly oppose lifting the embargo, seeing it only as a trigger to a far wider and more violent Balkan war. These countries and Russia will oppose any effort to repeal the currently applicable resolutions in the Security Council.

So we would begin our great undertaking, in all likelihood, with the unprecedented act of deliberately violating UN Security Council resolutions for which we originally voted. International lawyers may quibble about the interpretation and constitutionality (vis-à-vis Article 51 of the UN Charter) of the applicable Security Council resolutions. (The language extending the arms embargo, originally imposed on Yugoslav republics, to sovereign Bosnia is less than clear, and the resolution seems to violate the spirit of Article 51, which guarantees each sovereign nation the fundamental right to self-defense.) But the fact remains that we have accepted the consensus interpretation up till now. It is going to look strange, to put it mildly, if the United States attempts to Philadelphia-lawyer its way into a new interpretation of the resolutions that is 180-degrees opposed to its present one.

The alternative, of course, would be the first open violation of Security Council resolutions by an American government—an extremely hazardous precedent and one which, as the present administration has so often argued, threatens to undercut embargoes against Iraq and Libya that touch on our vital interests.

Beyond that, having dealt an unprecedentedly grave blow to our relations with Britain and France, and having split NATO, we would be far from assured of access to NATO air bases for our planned operations in Bosnia. Indeed, I believe American advocates of discarding NATO would pretty much have achieved their goal; it would be hard to salvage the alliance in the wake of such an open breach. Without access to NATO air bases, an air campaign in Bosnia would be difficult, to put it mildly.

This is to say nothing of our relations with Russia, far from smooth at present but still critical to long-term global security. It seems unlikely that Russia would become engaged in a major confrontation with the United States over Bosnia and Serbia—the Russians have too many other problems—but one can expect some very rough riding along the way. Russia would no doubt feel compelled to provide further military equipment to the Serbs in order to counter American weapons. And the perceived insult to Russian policy and prestige in the Balkans would almost certainly play into the hands of those in Russia who distrust and hate the West and who wish to turn that great country in an openly anti-Western and fascistic direction.

In other words, a vast array of concerns ultimately far more vital to our basic interests would have to be cast aside or actively put in jeopardy as we embark on this policy. We would be betting the mortgage on Bosnia.

SOME of course would still argue that the moral and international legal principles of guaranteeing the inviolability of borders (albeit of a state whose early international recognition was probably ill-advised) and of punishing aggression as well as war crimes, including possible genocide, demand a robust U.S. response. When such a response would have been timely and effective, I was wholly in agreement. But today these legitimate moral and geopolitical considerations must be weighed not only against the vast military and political hazards of belated intervention, including the hazard of total failure, but also against the moral

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dubiousness of exposing tens of thousands more civilians—Serbs, Croats, and Muslims—as well as NATO and American troops, to injury, death, and abuse in a uselessly reignited, widened war.

Current Western diplomacy in this crisis—a diplomacy, increasingly, of ineffectual appeasement of Serbia—is not pretty and may not succeed in preventing a reescalation and widening of the struggle. America, willy-nilly, may still be drawn in on the ground. But given the unholy complexities of what is at bottom a senseless civil war in a land now awash with unfathomable ethnic hatreds, the present goals of the diplomats—lessening of violence, protection of civilians, provision of relief, containment of the war, and, possibly, some sort of negotiated end to it all—seem to me the only rational course. Three years ago, we might have done something decisive and effective in Bosnia. Today it is simply too late.

Eugene V. Rostow: Thanks to President François Mitterrand of France, who has proposed a summit meeting of the main protagonists of the war in what was once Yugoslavia, the United States and its allies have received a gift almost unprecedented in the history of diplomacy: an opportunity to correct their mistakes—in this case, the mistakes they have been making steadily for nearly three years in allowing what began as a minor local quarrel in the Balkans to become a major threat to the general peace.

The basic reason for the failure of the negotiations to end the war is extremely simple. George Bush and Bill Clinton both announced publicly that while we were willing to use air power to facilitate agreement, we would not commit ground forces to that end. Yet to instruct ambassadors to negotiate peace in the midst of an active war without the influence of adequate military force behind them violates the first principle of diplomacy (and of common sense) and is a cruel and unusual punishment for the poor ambassadors, to boot. There is, however, good reason for optimism about the outcome if President Clinton respects this principle in the new round of negotiations to be initiated by President Mitterrand's recent call.

There are three possible procedures that could be used in carrying out the French plan: a special meeting of the North Atlantic Council; a special meeting of the UN Security Council; or simply a conference of the interested powers, in the style of the 19th-century "Congresses" of the Concert of Europe, the most successful peacekeeping experiment since the end of the Roman empire.

Since any serious procedure for making peace at this point will require the visible determination of the major powers to use ample force if necessary in behalf of the settlement, the choice among possible procedures is not in itself crucial to the possibility of success in the negotiations. But from the point of view of American policy, the preferred course would be to hold the conference in a NATO setting. It is an illusion to imagine that the UN Security Council can conduct a peace-enforcement action where serious hostilities may be necessary. This has never been done or even attempted, and there are no grounds for supposing that the Security Council is better equipped to undertake the responsibility now than has been the case for the last 50 years.*

On the other hand, the combined forces of NATO were trained to face down and, if necessary, to defeat the Red Army at the peak of its formidable powers. They could surely deal with Serbia. In doing so, moreover, NATO would be acting in accordance with three resolutions, the Harmel Resolution on Future Tasks adopted in 1967, and the two resolutions it adopted during 1991 and 1992—one at Oslo, the other at Gleneagles in Scotland—in response to the end of the Soviet Union and the political turbulence to be expected in the wake of that volcanic event. These resolutions declare the interest of NATO in the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic land mass, and they provide a firm legal and political foundation for the use of the alliance as the prin-

* Many believe that the operations in Korea and in the Persian Gulf were Security Council enforcement actions. This is not the case. They were actions of collective self-defense, which were approved by the Security Council, not operations decided upon and conducted by the Security Council and a multilateral force organized and commanded by the Security Council.

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cipal instrument for countering aggression in and near Europe.

THE present state of the conventional wisdom on Bosnia among the major powers was summed up perfectly by Lord Peter Carrington, a consummate and quintessential member of the international establishment. When asked by an interviewer whether there was a British national interest in Bosnia, he answered, "Plainly there isn't."

Both President Bush and President Clinton have similarly said that the war in Bosnia does not yet affect the national interest of the United States. But the national interest of the United States cannot be so narrowly defined.

I recently made a study of the national-security interests of the United States—the interests worth fighting for even in the nuclear age. I concluded that the supreme national interest of the United States was and necessarily would remain the successful management of the state system as a system of peace. That goal could only be sought by the cooperation of the major powers acting in accordance with the norms enunciated for our time in the Charter of the United Nations. The rule against aggression, understood as the greatest possible danger to political stability and hence to general peace, is the key provision of the United Nations Charter, and the key lesson of diplomatic experience since 1815. Another key lesson, confirmed by 20th-century experience with war, is that here as elsewhere in law, duty arises from circumstance; and since only the strong have the capacity to keep the peace, they also have the duty to do so.

This duty is acknowledged by Lord Carrington in connection with the war in Bosnia, but *only* if that war spreads beyond the boundaries of the defunct state of Yugoslavia. Thus, when pressed by the interviewer's question, "If there is no British interest, nor French, then who is going to keep the peace?," Lord Carrington responded that the European interest probably consisted of making sure that the war was contained within the former Yugoslavia's borders. If it spread outside, "we would be bound to intervene against the aggressor."

The reasoning here derives from the belief that Serbia has already won the war; that the Bosnians must be made to accept their defeat and the end of their national hopes; and that they must also be made to accept Greater Serbia as the inevitable outcome.

Former Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, speaking in London, recently reminded the British Foreign Minister that this reasoning closely resembled the argument made by American opponents of the Lend-Lease Act in 1941. France had surrendered in 1940; Britain had gone through Dunkirk and faced an apparently hopeless military situation. The American advocates of preemptive capitulation, like Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, were urging Britain to follow France's example, for the sake of "peace." Even with American Lend-Lease help, they contended, further British resistance could only prolong the war without affecting its outcome. Led by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, however, and driven by a strong tide in American public opinion, Congress rejected the counsel of defeat and passed the Lend-Lease Act.

In the Balkans, the time has come to reject similar counsels of defeat and to begin pursuing negotiations visibly and convincingly based on the threat of adequate force. As things now stand, the prospect is for more war, worse war, and spreading war (perhaps involving Greece, Turkey, and Albania) when the present cease-fire comes to an end. The risks in the situation for the NATO allies and for the other nations of the region are considerable, and certainly worth substantial exertion to anticipate and head off. After all, if, as Lord Carrington concedes, armed intervention will be necessary in the event that the war spreads, would it not be better to intervene with lesser force now to prevent the worst from happening later?

What the NATO allies—along with Russia, Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—should do now is to recognize that the Great Power policy for Bosnia has failed, and start over on a concerted program to defeat and undo the Serbian (and Croatian) aggression which is the cause of the Balkan tragedy; to make the resumption of such aggression impossible; and to try to achieve the old dream of a Balkan federation which the Allies failed to establish at Versailles in 1919.

There is another and most important dimension of the American interest in the Balkans: our interest in helping to make sure the unstable system of weak states in that part of the world does not evolve in ways which could permit a new and hostile combination to dominate the whole of Europe. A number of hypothetical scenarios for the next 50 years would raise that warning flag. Perhaps the least remote among them is that of a German-Russian combination for joint control of the European heartland. The idea of a Russo-German military alliance has been popular for at least two centuries in the imperialist circles of both countries. Its most recent manifestations were the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1917, through which the Soviet Union made a separate peace with Germany; the Rapallo Treaty of 1922, establishing a secret military alliance between the Soviet Union and the Weimar Republic; and the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, the opening move of World War II. Germany, of course, is now anchored to the West by nearly 50 years of constructive participation in NATO and the European

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movement. The future orientation of Russia and Eastern Europe is by no means so assured. Prudent Western policy should therefore take pains to make sure that neither country is exposed to the imperial temptation again.

For nearly three years, the NATO allies and the permanent members of the Security Council have been hiding behind patently erroneous interpretations of international law in order to excuse their failure to restore and maintain peace in the small but volatile corner of Europe which used to be Yugoslavia. The war going on there is not, as they have claimed, a civil war, because Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been widely recognized as independent states; most of them have been admitted to the United Nations. Yet even if it really were a civil war, the United Nations Charter (Article 2 [7]) acknowledges that an event (like a civil war), which would normally be characterized as within the domestic jurisdiction of a state, can also be a breach of international peace, and treated accordingly under Chapter VII of the Charter.

This war, surely, is quite as much a threat to the general peace as the one which began in Korea in 1950. The Korean war was also described by many at the time as a civil war. And South Korea, too, was at first thought to be outside the sphere of American interests. Indeed, Secretary of State Dean Acheson had made a remark which was interpreted by the Soviets as an "invitation" to unleash a North Korean invasion of the South. But President Truman decided to intervene—a decision that turned out to be the defining application of Western containment policy, and the greatest and most difficult single achievement of his lustrous term of office. It remains the model of what Western policy should be in response to significant aggression.

Like Lord Carrington, both President Bush and President Clinton have failed to explain how their warning ("we want a better peace plan, but we will not use American ground forces to achieve it") could be expected to deter the Serbian armed forces, or anybody else. In 1950, the U.S. Air Force advised Truman that it could stop the North Korean invasion of South Korea with air power alone. Truman, who had been an artillery captain in World War I, and the conscientious chairman of the Senate Committee on the Conduct of World War II, knew better.

The sensible course ahead for the U.S. and its allies in ex-Yugoslavia is thus clear. It is the policy of President Truman, not that of President Carter or President Clinton. Truman's policy does not make the United States the world's only policeman. Nor does it imply that every breach of the peace requires armed intervention as a remedy. The Roman maxim, *De minimis non curat lex* ("The law does not concern itself with trifles") still applies, just as it did, for example, when India annexed the Portuguese city-state of Goa some 30 years ago without provoking a response from the UN and without any significant disturbance of world public order.

Truman's policy, however, does acknowledge that aggression can be deterred and that peace can be kept only by a coalition of the strong powers like the 19th-century Concert of Europe. In the post-Soviet world order now taking shape, only such a coalition of the strong can be effective, and only if it is led by the strongest of the strong. To provide this leadership is in the highest national interest of the United States.

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An Unsung Jewish Prophet

Edward Norden

For most of their long history, especially in the century of Hitler and Stalin, Jews have faced their greatest threat in anti-Semitism. Yet in this same century another and perhaps ultimately more potent threat to Jewish survival has arisen, and not from without but within: assimilation. Earlier and more clearly than perhaps anyone, a certain professor, now all but forgotten, understood the scope and force of this threat.

A portrait immortalizes him with his wife and four children. The two middle children and their mother, seated on wicker chairs and dressed in the comfortable fashions of the *yishuv*—the pre-state Zionist colony in Palestine—face the camera with relatively open smiles. Behind them stands the eldest child; her eyes look out from shadows. The clean-shaven professor himself is all dignity. His dark suit is vested, his shoulders are rigid, his gaze, minus the usual spectacles, is aimed myopically elsewhere. Jowly, stoutish, half-bald, he could pass better as the grandfather than the father of the infant being held in its smiling mother's arms.

The year is 1927, the place Jerusalem, the man Arthur Ruppin, aged fifty-one. By all accounts, and from all the evidence, Ruppin was a modest, decent, optimistic type. He was also a most dedicated, far-sighted, and successful revolutionary.

"More than anyone else," the historian Paul Johnson writes correctly, "Ruppin was responsible for the nuts and bolts, the bread and butter of the new home," that is, of the Jewish state-in-the-making. If his name draws a blank in most of the world today, the explanation is that, unlike Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, or David Ben-Gurion, he was not a Zionist spellbinder, did not parley with mighty Gentiles, and never ordered men into battle. Outside Israel, about the only people who can identify this German-speaking family man are a few academics who specialize in the sociology and demography of the Jews: fields invented by Ruppin in his spare time.

Until 1904 and his book *Juden der Gegenwart* ("The Jews of Today"), Jewish demography did not exist and Jewish sociology was a mishmash. The pillars of the school of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (the "Science of Judaism"), trained in German universities, had to rely on anecdotes and their own enormous first-hand knowledge when bringing their historical studies up to the present day. Ruppin at the age of twenty-eight introduced some order, gravity, reliability. He wished his data to be accepted as cold, indisputable, useful *facts*; and so they were, quite widely and quickly.

But that was not all. The dry numbers implied for Ruppin a vision of the future of the Jews, which he wanted his readers to see as he did. For although he was not yet a card-carrying Zionist when *Juden der Gegenwart* came out, he was on the verge. After he made the decision to give his life over to the movement, the many other books he was to publish all put social science in the service of the cause. The extent to which the predictions in this work have come to pass may be a measure of the truth that some ideologies are less blinding than others.

Ruppin was not the only Zionist between the Rhine and Koenigsberg, the Baltic and the Alps. He was, however, one of those uncommon Zionists in *Mitteleuropa* who moved to the Land of Israel before Hitler obliged them to. In fact, he and his first wife, Selma, constituted a two-person vanguard, making the switch in 1908, when Palestine was still a backwater of the Ottoman empire. Offered the job of setting up and running the first Zionist office in Palestine itself, of bringing some order to a disorderly and demoralized enterprise, Ruppin accepted. The next year, he was in the thick of the founding of Tel Aviv, in the dunes north of Jaffa, and the year after that, Degania, the first kibbutz.

For a man of Ruppin's education and bearing, to pack up and leave Berlin for Jaffa was comparable to a Bostonian romantically leaving for Arizona with his bride long before either the Indians or the outlaws had been taken care of. This no-nonsense Ph.D., lawyer and businessman, amateur agronomist and eugenicist, arrived in a country in Asia without electricity, without telephones, without paved roads, without sewerage, without a hospital deserving of the name, without a proper

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judicial system, without schools let alone a university, and without a concert hall—indeed, without many other Jews besides the pious beggars of Jerusalem and Safed. Young David Green had arrived from Poland only three years before to metamorphose into David Ben-Gurion, and in all of Palestine there were at most a couple of thousand other unemployed Zionist pioneers like him, languishing, orating, feuding, dreaming, and starving.

Ruppin was no socialist. He was a scrupulously apolitical revolutionary who gave of his energies, knowledge, intelligence, and planning genius to any project important to Zionism. We might call him a technocrat if he were not so many-sided and essentially, though never too obviously, passionate. From 1908 until World War I, he managed Zionist land purchase and settlement. From 1916 to 1920, exiled by the Turks to Constantinople, he was on active standby, making sure that funds brought over from America by the U.S. ambassador in town, the generally anti-Zionist Henry Morgenthau, got to the *yishuv* to keep it alive. From 1920 to 1933, back in British mandatory Palestine, he was in charge of both settlement and the economy of the National Home, as the Zionist project was called in the Balfour Declaration. And from 1933, he directed the immigration of Jewish youngsters from Central Europe.

Prodigiously active, he also set up *Brit Shalom* (Peace Union) in the 1920's, the original Peace Now, where mainly German-speaking intellectuals discussed how the Arabs might be reconciled to Zionism. These doves were ready to concede much. Until the Arab riots of 1929, Ruppin himself was a binationalist—he did not see the need for a sovereign Jewish state, with all its inevitably dreary trappings. But by 1933, he had broken with his dear friends and fellow doves at the Hebrew University (where he occupied the first chair in sociology) and left *Brit Shalom*, convinced that nothing the Jews did could persuade the Arabs to agree to Zionist settlement and open-ended Jewish immigration: prerequisites to the survival of the Jews and to the continuation of Jewish history.

It was in the shadow of his disagreement with the binationalists, and while he was heading up the rescue of children from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, that Ruppin found the time to finish the works which made his reputation in the world, such as it is.

RUPPIN'S many books were actually one book continually revised, expanded, updated. The last two—*The Jews in the Modern World* (1935) and *The Jewish Fate and Future* (1940)—rounded it out and comprised the stuff of his lectures, delivered by him painfully in the language of the embryonic state.

Nothing if not radical, Ruppin starts by trying to define who a Jew is. "On the face of it," he writes, this is "an easy matter to determine"—a Jew is someone "who belongs to the Jewish religion." But what of all the people, especially in the U.S., USSR, and Central and Western Europe, who have shed religious practice and belief, yet still think of themselves or are considered by others to be Jews? These "fully assimilated" or "half-assimilated" Jews were already estimated to make up half the Jews in the world, and Ruppin was not about to count them out—let alone serious Zionists like himself who were not religious, either.

If the Jews had ceased being definable as members of a religious community, were they a race, as many of those who hated them, and some who did not, were saying? Ruppin is not consistent here. In his early books, he does refer to the Jews often as a race, among other things, and even in his last revisions the word creeps in, for example when he speaks of "intermarriage with other races." Ahead of it in certain ways, Ruppin in others was a man of his time, and of his 19th-century education.

Since no one more than 50 years later can do any better, we should pardon Ruppin for never quite deciding who a Jew is and what the Jews are. The main point is that this "nation"—the term he used most often—had until recently been bound together by religion. But that was changing, and the change put the survival of this indefinable group in question as never before.

It had been at risk, of course, since the Romans burned the Temple and most of the Jews were dispersed from their sliver of land. Ever since, they had "carried on a desperate fight for existence, not with weapons or physical force, but by tenacious resistance to oppression." Hope, ritual, and belief gave the Jews the strength to endure—hope in "the coming of the Messiah and the rebuilding of Zion," the 24-hour, day-in and day-out ritual of religious observance and belief in "their mission as heralds of the one God."

Their religion had defined and preserved the Jews in their dispersion: that was Ruppin's basic answer to what he called the "riddle" of Jewish survival. But his own secularism, and his realism, told him that for the majority of modern Jews, a return to Orthodoxy was not in the cards. As for a non-Orthodox variety of Judaism, like Reform, which had seen the light of day in Germany and was constructing temples all over the U.S., it might hold some Jews a while longer, postpone assimilation a generation or two. But since it demanded and engendered "no . . . spirit of self-sacrifice," the tides of assimilation would crumble it, too.

Of course, assimilation was not a new story. "Wherever the Jews lived as equals in the midst of a high civilization based on science and philosophy rather than on religion," as in Hellenistic Alexandria and Arab Spain, there had been assimilation, with demographic losses. But in the

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past, while one branch of Jewry might shrivel, another would send forth "new shoots." Poland was the best example of a country where a great many Jews had retained their identity, their unreconstructed religion, and often their self-respect—largely thanks to the inferiority of the culture around them. Lately, however, things had changed:

> The protection afforded by lower standards of civilization among their neighbors . . . has practically disappeared because a large number of Jews have now moved to countries on a high cultural and economic level, and even in the backward countries the level is improving. The "reservations" within which Jewish culture and religion were hitherto preserved are continually shrinking in size, while the front open to attack by outside influences is extending.

IN THE Western countries to which millions of East European Jews had managed to go before the Bolshevik coup and the American anti-immigration laws of 1924, Ruppin expected assimilation to do its worst. "Civilized and economically advanced countries," of which the United States was the model now that Germany had reverted to barbarism, made it "extraordinarily difficult for the Jews to maintain themselves as a separate group." The flusher the times, the lustier the process of assimilation. "Thus, paradoxically, the countries most favorable to the advancement of the individual Jew are least favorable to the survival of the Jewish nation."

Ruppin's brief section on the U.S. in *Jews of the Modern World* is entitled "Ascendancy of American Jewry." He himself had spent the better part of 1922-24 in the U.S. Traveling with Weizmann and Louis Brandeis, he collected money and wooed men like Louis Marshall and other worthies of German background away from their nervous anti-Zionism. Though none became Jewish nationalists, some toned down their views, and a few gave contributions which came in very handy.

Ruppin seems to have taken care not to dive too deeply into life in the New World. Was it lest he become enchanted? America had swallowed up more than one Zionist with a feeble will or a wandering eye. But he learned that something without precedent in Jewish history, at least in scope, was going on. "Never in the Diaspora have so many million[s of] Jews lived in one country in freedom and comfort." It testifies to his intelligence that he could write this at a time when Henry Ford was publishing *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Harvard was instituting quotas, Palm Beach was restricted, and the sweatshop had by no means disappeared.

But as different, indeed unprecedented, as the American Diaspora was in some ways, it was not different enough to lift it clear of Jewish history, above the corrosive givens wearing down the Diaspora as a whole. In fact, this huge, prosperous, free community was *more* vulnerable to assimilation than any other, since the U.S. was a "highly civilized and economically advanced" country where church and state did not mix—i.e., where the perfect atmosphere obtained for assimilation.

Not that the American Jews wanted to vanish. Their motto was accommodation, not assimilation. They proposed to be fully American, to swim in the ocean of American civilization and freedom and possibility, while preserving their heritage somehow and passing it on to their children.

This was commendable in Ruppin's eyes but probably impossible of fulfillment. He could not imagine how the native-born, enjoying "full American citizenship" and speaking only English, acquainted with "Jewish religion and Jewish history" only through "homeopathic doses" received in Sunday school, would be able to survive as a distinct group. The apparent vitality of Jewish culture in America—as, for example, in the Yiddish press and theater—was spurious and transient, a spinoff of the arrival of millions of Yiddish-speakers from 1881 to 1924. Jewish life in America did not and could not have the requisite depth and fire and staying power it had in Poland—or, more important, in the *yishuv*.

The chief effect and cause of assimilation in America, Ruppin predicted, would be not so much conversion as "mixed marriages." His diary has no record of his taking in *Abie's Irish Rose*, which opened in 1924. But he might as well be referring to that smash Broadway hit when he writes that even when assimilation is not the purpose of marrying out, the effect over the generations must be the same.

When the play opened and Ruppin wrote this, the American intermarriage rate was a mere 5 percent, a figure he knew and which did not throw him off. He was sure that as the children of the Lower East Side and Brownsville made themselves at home, they would follow the lead of the Sephardim and German Jews who had preceded them to the New World and choose exogamy more and more. "The frequency of mixed marriages increases parallel with the length of the stay of the Jew in the United States." This was a simple fact, recorded also by the New York sociologist Julius Drachsler in 1920.

Besides stating facts, Ruppin was also capable of deriving laws. Here is one, in his next-to-last book, published in 1935: "Intermarriage, as soon as it appears on a large scale, marks the end of Judaism."

IF THE rate in America was negligible in the mid-1920's, in *Mitteleuropa* it was not. In the middle years of Weimar Germany, it was 44.8 percent and going up. Thronging behind Ruppin's neat columns of figures was a

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messy crowd of true-life stories—Jewish-Gentile couplings and marriages and uncouplings and offspring in the stylish, rotten heart of Europe.

A scientist, Ruppin did not have to provide his readers with gossip. Besides, the German-speakers among them were as likely to be familiar with these stories as, no doubt, he himself was, even after he left Berlin for Jerusalem, where the ex-Germans, ex-Austrians, and ex-Czechs kept up with the doings in that world they had presumably said good-bye and good riddance to.

The traffic of books, letters, and people between the *yishuv* and Europe, except during world wars, was heavy and ran both ways. Those who could afford it regularly visited the Old Country to rest, ski, attend to Zionist business, see relatives and friends, catch the newest sensation. For example, Gershom Scholem, the great scholar of Jewish mysticism, and his wife Fanya were in Berlin in 1932, where they not only met Scholem's friend, the critic Walter Benjamin, but took in the Bertolt Brecht-Kurt Weill collaboration, *Die Dreigroschenoper* ("The Threepenny Opera"). Such people as the Scholems would return to Palestine with new books in German, fragile recordings of the intermarried Bruno Walter conducting the works of the intermarried Gustav Mahler, and much intelligent gossip.

Any reader of newspapers would remember that the Jewish Kurt Eisner, weak boss of the Bavarian Communist statelet in 1918, had been assassinated by a Count Arco Valley, who sought thereby to prove to his right-wing German friends that he was all right, even if his mother was Jewish. A steady reader of current German literature—and there were many among these Zionists—would also be familiar with the saga of Karl Kraus, guardian of the German language, Jewish anti-Semite, who fell in love with a succession of lovely *shikses*, none of whom would marry him, even after he had temporarily converted, including the Baroness Sidonie Nadherny von Borutin, at whose rambling country estate the great satirist would take breaks from Vienna and to whom he dedicated much of his finest poetry.

These were some of the more famous cases in the realm of assimilation, achieved or at least attempted, of which Ruppin must have known. He could depend on fellow Palestinians to keep him fully in the picture about others. Kurt Weill's brother settled on Mount Carmel, the garden spot overlooking Haifa which Ruppin planned and launched. Else Lasker-Schueler, the once-intermarried bohemian and perhaps the most amazing German poet of this century after Rilke, showed up in Jerusalem in 1938 and lived and wrote there in poverty until her death in 1945. Scholem's brother, still in Germany, was an intermarried Communist. And young Teddy Kollek from Vienna, then a kibbutznik, could tell the story of a certain Alice "Litzi" Friedmann, who in 1934 had married a stuttering charming boy just graduated from Cambridge by the name of Philby. "I wouldn't call it exactly a marriage of convenience," Litzi, who was a Communist and whose first husband was a Zionist, would tell one of Kim's biographers eons later.

SMALL, overlapping worlds. Hugo Bergmann, professor of philosophy and founder of the library at the brand-new Hebrew University, stayed in touch with an old schoolmate in his native Prague by the name of Franz Kafka. It is not known whether Ruppin read any of his stories while Kafka was still alive, but Bergmann certainly did, and also corresponded with him, trying to lure him to Zion and the sun.

Kafka, a great receiver of letters, also wrote them by the ream. In one dated 1921 to Ottla, his youngest and favorite sister, we discover the following:

> You know that you are doing something out of the ordinary, and that to do it well is extremely difficult. If you never forget the responsibilities implicit in so hard a task, if you are aware that you are breaking ranks with as much self-confidence as that with which David, for instance, left the army, and if, despite this awareness, you retain faith in your strength to carry this matter to some sort of satisfactory conclusion, then—to end on a bad joke—you will have done more than if you had married ten Jews.

David was Joseph David, a Czech Gentile who had skipped from the Austro-Hungarian army and whom Ottla, despite thoughts of becoming a farmer and going to Palestine, was about to marry. Zionists were not supposed to marry out: to do so was to mock themselves and their program. Yet the serious Ottla did, and her brother, whose own interest in Zionism was no pose, was far from dogmatic in his reaction. Others in Prague's little Zionist circle felt otherwise. The writer Max Brod, trustee-to-be of Kafka's manuscripts and his best friend, was (according to the Kafka biographer Ernst Pawel) "frankly disapproving" of Ottla and "expressed regret over the prospective loss to Jewry."

Word of such personal matters and the opinions and reactions of all concerned got to the men and women pioneers and later refugees in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv almost as quickly as it traveled the Prague-Vienna-Berlin axis. News of the eventual sequels would take longer to arrive. When the Nazi deportations started in 1942, Ottla's marriage to an "Aryan" might have saved her. It might also have meant trouble for David and their two daughters. Kafka's sister convinced her husband to divorce her to protect their children. She then registered as a Jew and was sent to Theresienstadt, where instead of keeping quiet she volunteered to accompany a transport to Auschwitz. If the rest of Kafka's family was

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straightforwardly murdered, Ottla seems to have elected to commit suicide in two steps.

Her brother himself had died in 1924, but one cannot help wondering what his thoughts would have been on this. Did it carry the matter to "some sort of satisfactory conclusion"? What is clear is that Franz himself might have faced the same choices if he had only lived, continued to put Bergmann off, and succeeded in taking away from her husband the woman whom Pawel calls "perhaps [his] one true love."

Milena Jasenska in grainy photographs looks the sexy, intelligent, generous, brave, slightly unhinged *shikse* tomboy that she was. Kafka's translator into Czech, she delighted him even before they met. And when they did, and took a holiday in the country together, he may for the first and last time have found his other half. There was certainly a good deal less between them of that ethereal sadomasochism which had torpedoed his on-again, off-again engagements to his Jewish fiancées, the poor lantern-jawed Felice Bauer followed by Julie Wohryzek.

Milena was liberated, and as long as this very brief affair lasted, she liberated Kafka, giving him a terrific scare. We may imagine that if she had agreed to join him for good, as he perhaps not insincerely begged her to, there would have been a civil marriage, and possibly a child. But generous as Milena was, she was not generous enough to give in to his pleas. She chose to remain with her Jewish husband, a dilettante who may have humiliated her by sleeping around but who was not coughing blood.

In the 1960 edition of his own biography of Kafka, Max Brod calls Milena "a truly great woman." He gives no hint whether he was gratified or saddened that his friend could not win this Gentile for his wife. Nor are we told what advice, if any, Brod gave Kafka when the latter was experiencing bouts of joy and agony over the Milena connection. At any rate, the rejected Kafka survived long enough to begin and pretty much finish *The Castle*, with its unpossessable Frieda. Not long after, he was lucky enough to meet the young Dora Diament, fresh from a hasidic upbringing in Poland. They married in the Jewish way, and the girl idolized, nursed, and studied Hebrew with the patient in his last months. He was already too sick to write or, evidently, to procreate.

As for Milena, having divorced her unfaithful Jewish husband soon after Kafka's death, passed through a Communist phase, and had a daughter with a Gentile, she continued being friendly with Jews. During the war she was taken to the concentration camp at Ravensbruck, where before she died she impressed with her courage and humane intelligence another Gentile prisoner, the Communist ex-wife of Martin Buber's son. It is no easier to imagine what the dead Kafka's thoughts would have been about Milena's choice than about the one his sister made. But it would have been hypocritical for him to try to steer Ottla away from her non-Jew when he might with nearly unalloyed ecstacy have married his.

JEWISH women like Ottla or Litzi Friedmann had to be rebellious if they were to aspire to much of what their brothers were considered entitled to. These arty, horny sons of Jewish businessmen were no doubt expected by their parents to marry the Jewish women who had impatiently waited for their proposals; but before doing so, and even after, they could take their pleasure with servant girls, chambermaids, and actresses without raising a scandal. This held almost as true for the Zionists as it did for the *Grunzjuden* or "marginal Jews." In the memoirs Brod composed in Tel Aviv, he remembers "the nights we spent together in theaters, cabarets, or in wine taverns in the company of pretty girls." The "we" included Bergmann and Kafka, and the girls tended to be neither middle-class nor Jewish.

With variations, the scene was replicated in the other capitals of *Kultur*. It was the sort of thing anti-Semites fretted over tremendously, as in *Mein Kampf*:

> The black-haired Jewish youth lies in wait for hours on end, satanically glaring at and spying on the unsuspicious girl whom he plans to seduce, adulterating her blood and removing her from the bosom of her own people.

In truth, not all the Gretchens were so innocent.

Arthur Ruppin himself had his chances. He says that at seventeen, he felt "a strong urge." He also had his own character, however:

> Certainly the question of sexual intercourse did not arise; I shrank from it because of my moral beliefs. But I found it pleasant to be in the company of girls and, following the example of the young men I worked with, I began to visit dance halls on Sundays. I never became a good dancer, and the conversations with my dancing partners mostly did not appeal to me, but I persuaded myself that this contact with girls would be a means of alleviating the "sensuality" which plagued me.

Jewish sons more comfortable in their skins or highly sexed than Ruppin could enjoy themselves. There were dangers, of course. One was falling in love and being rejected, like Kraus, like Kafka. Another was VD. A third was finding yourself on the brink of an intermarriage with a woman too far beneath your station. The fourth was marrying an anti-Semite.

Beware the *shikse*! Maybe she would not, like Delilah, actually deliver her Jewish husband to his enemies, but she would throw his origins in his face when her superego nodded, or would turn her back when the going became rough. This clincher, pragmatic rather than ideological,

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was adduced by a number of Jewish writers in German. Thus, Lion Feuchtwanger, a novelist married all his life to a Jewish woman, has his bachelor hero's German mistress in *The Oppermanns* drop him when the Nazis triumph—this, despite the fact that more than half the refugees who fetched up with Feuchtwanger in Los Angeles were Berlin and Vienna Jews or half-Jews whose Gentile wives stood by them through danger and exile: Fritz Lang's, for instance, and Kurt Weill's, and Bruno Walter's, and Max Reinhardt's, and Franz Werfel's. Was it a libelous generalization? Life provided enough instances of the non-Jewish wife leaving the Jewish husband, even when they were both refugees, to half-justify the smear.

If the *shikse* was undependable, so was her rarer counterpart, the Gentile husband of the Jewish woman. Into the mouth of a not-unsympathetic, not-unintelligent Jewish character in one of his novels, Arthur Schnitzler, Herzl's confidant and fellow Viennese man of letters, puts these words:

> Do you believe that there is a single Christian on earth, even the noblest and most just, who, if his best friend, his mistress, or his wife happens to be Jewish, would not, in a moment of anger or irritation, reproach them with their Jewishness?

Scholem was to recall one of his mother's female cousins who intermarried at "the beginning of the 1890's," only to be deserted "a few years later." Then, in 1911, his mother's sister, a physician, intermarried with a colleague:

> The big test came in 1933. After a while my uncle discovered . . . that he was an "Aryan" and asked my aunt Kathe to release him so he could marry a German. Thus my aunt was later taken to the ghetto of Theresienstadt, where she died.

The frailty of the mixed marriage under the pressure of the Nazis and the race laws is also the burden of *The Jewish Wife*, a playlet by none other than (the non-Jewish) Bertolt Brecht. Judith tells Fritz, "chief surgeon at the clinic," that she is going to Amsterdam "for a time," hoping that her husband will either offer to go into exile with her or try to talk her out of it. He does neither. This sketch packs a certain wallop, and it is only ironic that it should be the work of a man who was perpetually beastly to his doggishly faithful, masochistic Jewish Communist spouse, Helene Weigel, in Weimar Germany, in Hollywood, and lastly in the German Democratic Republic.

And what about the Zionists? Most of them having left religion behind, it was nationalist ideology which kept them from marrying out and having to face such moments of truth. The few who did intermarry could be counted on the fingers of one hand and represented the kind of exceptions which prove rules. Take Martin Buber, guru of the more soulful of the German-speaking Zionists. Dumped in childhood by his mother and raised by his grandfather in Galicia, the young Buber drank up Nietzsche and the opera in Vienna, Berlin, Zurich. For five years he lived with Paula Winkler, a Catholic from Munich, without marrying her. They had two children during that period, exactly when Herzl was founding the Zionist movement and Buber was joining it, giving Zionist lectures, and briefly editing the Zionist organ, *Die Welt*.

Buber's domestic situation caused talk. One of his younger admirers, the historian Hans Kohn, tried later to cast it in a positive light:

> The young Jew, who longed at that time for a maturity of Jewish peoplehood in the fullness of living form illuminated by beauty, found in this young woman, in whose being, as with many southern Germans, romantic sense-forms and Nordic thoughtfulness were joined, not only understanding for the dreams and strivings of his people, but also the embodiment of that free, beautiful, self-confident humanity that since the Enlightenment many of the best young Jews had found in non-Jewish women.

Yet if Buber was to have standing in Zionism, things would have to be formalized with a marriage, and not just any marriage. Paula Buber in 1905 converted to Judaism in the Orthodox way, including a dip in the ritual bath. "I grow in your cause," she wrote her betrothed, like Ruth in the Bible. "It will be mine and that of our children." A Jewish wedding followed. Although at least one of Buber's friends persisted in cutting him for a few more years, the other Zionists were placated, at least officially.

The union ran for another 56 years and reportedly was a fairly happy, rather creative partnership. Paula, who wrote novels under a masculine pen-name and was one of the first women to cross the Alps on a bicycle, kept a spotless home and helped Buber lighten his prose. She and Martin raised as Jews the daughters of their son Raphael, who had been left by his Gentile wife, the same woman who met Milena Jasenska in Ravensbruck. The only suggestive fact, perhaps, is that when Paula died on holiday in Venice in 1961, she was buried there. Buber, who died in Jerusalem four years after, lies alone.

DESPITE all these complications reaching even into the *yishuv*, it was still the only place where the Jewish birth rate was rising when Ruppin published his last two books. Everywhere else it had been declining steeply for a generation—this, after more than a century of population explosion. In fact, in countries like Germany and Austria, Jewish deaths had run ahead of births as early as 1909. Jews had everywhere taken to birth control in advance of and more efficiently than their neighbors.

A modern type, Ruppin was not against birth

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control in principle; he opposed it only if practiced so devotedly that "the nation is threatened with gradual extinction." But when coupled with a high rate of intermarriage, low fertility did threaten the Jews of the Diaspora with just that. What was prudential and reasonable for the individual, and for any number of Jewish couples and families, was in the not-so-long run deadly for the group, especially if that group was fast assimilating anyway. Ruppin offered an anthropological comparison with a Zionist twist to explain why the Jews he knew best—those whose mother-tongue was German—had actually begun choosing death over life while Hitler was still an art student in Vienna:

> Much as primitive peoples lose their traditional ways of living and their enjoyment of life under the impact of alien influences, and voluntarily die out, the Jews in these countries are tending to "race suicide."

Looking ahead, he reckoned on "stagnancy or a decline in the number of Jews in the world." What could be done? In the Diaspora, nothing much. The only answer was promptly to settle a great many more Jews in Zion, where, experience showed, they all started having more children without needing to go back to religion, and without renouncing modernity.

These numbers and this solution were tendered by a man who was himself the father of four Jewish children, all conceived, and three born, in the Land of Israel. We come back to the family portrait taken in 1927. Palestine when Ruppin moved there was no place for a husband, even if he were a Zionist, to let his wife, thirty-six years old, go into labor with their first child. Therefore, three months before her time, Ruppin took Selma back to Berlin. They engaged a "well-known obstetrician" who proceeded to botch up—though a healthy child was born, the uterus was torn. Selma was then operated on to have it "fixed." The child was Ruth, the sad-eyed teenager of the portrait.

In 1912, Selma became pregnant again. This time she was confined in Jaffa, where the doctor and midwife did not realize until after the baby was dead that the badly-repaired womb was not contracting as it should. "After they had removed the child artificially, blood-poisoning set in." Ruppin's first wife died and was buried on the Mount of Olives.

Ruppin states in his memoirs that this was "the first great sorrow of my life." After it he worked twice as hard, at least until World War I started and he, Ben-Gurion, and others were asked to leave by the Turks. Waiting out the war in Constantinople, he met and married a considerably younger German Jewish woman, Hannah Kahn, with whom he was to have three more children, the last when he was 50 years of age. The children cheered him up, the Arabs and Nazis fitfully depressed him. In an expanded chapter on anti-Semitism in *The Jewish Fate and Future*, Ruppin considers Nazism and the Palestinian riots of 1929 and uprising of 1936-39. He differentiates between Arab "hatred of the Jews" and European racial anti-Semitism. The difference for him is not that the Arabs have a rational grievance over Palestine, but that in Zion "the Jews are able to defend themselves from attack, and no psychical sufferings or humiliation can be inflicted on them . . . for they have no desire for assimilation with the Arabs and are out to develop their own culture." By contrast, those Jews in Europe, especially Germany, who tried hardest to assimilate culturally were now the most defenseless.

He was not so well—he was growing deaf and had other problems. The *yishuv*, however, thanks partly to him, was almost ready for its debut as a state. The last entry in his diary is for December 20, 1942. Twelve days later, working in his garden, he died.

A boulevard linking the Knesset building and downtown Jerusalem, which passes by one of the campuses of the Hebrew University, is named after Arthur Ruppin, as is a kibbutz in the Beit She'an valley. The Jews of Israel still thrive, just as he predicted they would, and still struggle with their enemies. And, just as he predicted they would, most Jews in the "highly civilized and economically advanced" regions of the Diaspora continue to intermarry, to have too few children, in a word, to assimilate. Prophet though he was, this spectacle would have given him no satisfaction to behold.

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What My Father Knew

Ruth R. Wisse

On the morning of June 22, 1940 my mother, my elder brother, and I fled the Romanian city of Czernowitz to join my father in Bucharest. The signal for our departure was a phone call from one of my father's former employees, a certain Boncescu, and it had not been entirely unexpected. Boncescu asked for Father and, when told that he was in the capital on business, instructed my mother to prepare a bag for the children and to take the next train there. She had two hours to pack. We left the house where I was born at 4 Urban Jarnik without good-byes. Years later the neighbors' son described to me how he had come to visit my brother as they had arranged, but found the door bolted, his knock unanswered.

My father was by profession a chemical engineer. In 1934 he had been sent to Czernowitz by his Polish employer to build the first rubber factory in northern Romania, and within a year he had Caurum up and running (as it does to this day), employing between 600 and 900 workers in two or three shifts, producing rubber boots, hospital sheeting, tubing, bouncing balls for children. For his achievement he received a medal from King Carol. It was this medal, along with his skills of persuasion and probably significant bribes, that after two months in Bucharest, and on the condition of no return, finally secured for us the exit visas we needed to leave the country. Since my parents' Polish papers would have doomed us, we traveled across Europe as stateless persons, with Lisbon as the port of departure and Montreal our final destination.

Father plotted our future and our itinerary as carefully as he could. South American papers were the easiest to buy, and given his passion for rubber, he should have taken us to Venezuela. But after six years as a Romanian manufacturer, he said he did not want to live again where there were only two classes—the rich and the poor. He decided to join his brothers who had recently immigrated to Canada.

We took the first leg of our journey by train. A photograph of the four of us at the Acropolis shows what improbable tourists we made, standing impassive in brilliant sunshine with our backs to the glory of Greece, white shoes scuffed in the sand. Athens was the high point of the trip. Through the Mediterranean we cruised by boat, anticipating the dangers at each port of call. At age four, with blond hair, my precocity sharpened by the tension, and speaking German as my mother tongue, I was the one the officials questioned at points of inspection, or if not, I was encouraged to volunteer the answers. In Italian waters, where my father had expected trouble from the fascist militiamen, there was only a perfunctory passenger check on board; at British Gibraltar, smiling soldiers in short khakis did their work so scrupulously that some hapless souls were left ashore.

In the way of such things, the real danger came to us as a complete surprise.

We had reached Lisbon in the middle of September, two weeks before our ship was to sail. Our Canadian visa authorization had arrived—how, is another story—but because our ship would be docking in New York (from where we would take the train to Montreal), we were also required to have transit visas for the United States. Before giving us these documents, the American consul wanted proof of our wealth and our health. Instructing my very short-sighted father to undergo an eye examination, he gave him the name of the local opthamologist. The doctor turned out to be away on holiday, scheduled to return several days after our ship would leave port.

No refugee family is without at least one story of this kind, of the moment their lives hung by a hair. We went back to the consulate and Father explained the situation: could the consul please give him the name of another specialist? The consul could not. Father stressed the importance of this journey for us as prospective Canadian immigrants (not as Jews—the dread word was never spoken), and the value of four trans-Atlantic berths. The consul regretted that he could not change the rules. Then Father lost his head, or else chose to gamble. Grabbing the consul's hand, he pointed it at my brother and me and shouted, "You are a crazy man! Will you throw

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away the lives of these children? Give me the name of another doctor or I will kill you!"

His English was not strong, nor was he, so I cannot imagine that his words struck fear into the consul's heart. Mother, recalling the scene, said she knew we were finished. But perhaps something in Father's desperation forced the American to recognize him as a man. Without saying a word, he extricated himself from Father's grasp and issued us the visas. Consequently, we were able to leave Lisbon aboard the New Hellas on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, 1940—the same day, 36 years later, that my father died.

HAVING perused many such accounts of Jewish flight across Europe, my reader is now probably imagining us spared the Nazi death camps. But like the history of our time, our family's history was more complicated than that. It was the Soviets, not the Nazis, we were fleeing—and had we not eluded them, my father and probably we, too, would have expired somewhere in the gulag along with many more victims than were killed in the Germans' crematoria.

As general manager and part owner of Romania's largest rubber factory, my father was the very model of the class enemy. He was also a well-read and intelligent political observer. Monitoring the threats from both ends of Europe, but especially from the East, he had asked the trusted Boncescu to wire immediately if the Russians should cross the border and, anticipating their invasion that summer, had already gone to Bucharest to try to get us exit papers. No one could have known yet of what the Nazis were capable, because despite the virulence of their anti-Semitism, the scale of governmentally-organized killing in Germany was still relatively small.

By contrast, Russia had already registered its trademark on state murder. The kulaks lay forcibly starved by the millions. The purges had set a record in the elimination of elites. Many of my parents' friends who had crossed from Poland into Russia to participate in the great socialist experiment were already known to be dead or missing "in Siberia."

But, of course, the main reason my father knew just what he had to fear from the Communists was that he had once been attracted to Communism himself.

"YOUR mother would shoot me if she knew I were telling you this, but your father Leibl was a Communist in the 1920's." The woman who favored me with this information in Jerusalem in 1980 had grown up with my mother in that legendary life called "Vilna,"* and had stayed on in Communist Poland after the war. She and her second husband had come to Israel only in 1968, when Europe's most durable ideology claimed Poland anew, making reluctant Zionists of yet another group of Jewish internationalists.

Now that she had settled among the Jews, this woman's Communism rested uncomfortably on her conscience, like a mink coat that becomes embarrassing once public opinion clamors for animal rights. That is to say, she felt obliged to apologize for her political views only out of deference to the scruples of others. Assuming the same held true for my father, she thought it unlikely that he would have risked the scowl of his Americanized children by recounting his political past. But she was wrong: my father's experience with Communism was precisely the sort of thing he *was* willing to talk about. What better form of moral instruction than to try to understand the nature of error?

Leibl had been initiated into Communism at its source. The story had begun with an earlier expulsion, this one from Bialystok, Poland, in 1914, when the Germans captured the city. The entire family had fled to Russia, where my grandfather and his two elder sons tried to continue the family business by starting up a small textile mill near Moscow while his wife and their three younger children—Leibl being the littlest—sought safety in Saratov on the Volga. In the absence of a Jewish *heder*, Leibl was sent to the local school.

Only in 1917, after the February revolution, was the family reunited in Moscow, and there they reaped the fruits of liberty. The factory my grandfather had started in the nearby town of Pavlovski Passad, employing Russian workers, produced cloth that he could now sell legally in the city, and within a short time he had amassed enough capital to consider expanding the business. Under the czar, Jews had been prevented by discriminatory laws from living in Moscow, but now Grandfather could legally rent a room for his family, legally send his children to school, and legally instruct his youngest son for his bar mitzvah.

But by the time Leibl came to read his portion of the Torah in the small synagogue and to taste his reward of brandy and cake, there had occurred a second revolution. Lenin had replaced the young parliament with a dictatorship of the proletariat and set up the Cheka, the Extraordinary Commission for the Struggle Against Counterrevolution and Sabotage, or political police, with orders to shoot "speculators" on sight. The press, the schools, the law were nationalized, along with the banks and industries.

The Soviets confiscated Grandfather's business and his savings without any right of appeal; he was told he could stay on as the state's temporary manager. Trying to recoup some of his losses by selling a fraction of the production on the black market, he eluded the Cheka for three years, once daring to drive a wagon of his goods through the Moscow streets.

* See Ruth Wisse's "The Most Beautiful Woman in Vilna," COMMENTARY, June 1981.—ED.

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While Grandfather tried to exercise his freedom, his youngest son fell in thrall. The year of his bar mitzvah, 1918, Leibl stood among thousands listening to Leon Trotsky (né Bronstein) in Red Square. As between the two Jewish lawgivers, he much admired the perfect orator of Moscow over the all-too-human stammerer of Sinai. By the time the family returned to Poland, he had decided to claim his independence. Refusing to study in a yeshiva, he attended the Polish high school in a neighboring town, then passed the entrance exams for Stephen Bathory University in Vilna. He supported himself through tutoring, and performed prodigious feats of memory. Once, during a set of final examinations in mathematics, he pointed out an error in the test, and after being threatened with expulsion, was vindicated when a supervisor came in to report the mistake.

How shall I characterize Leibl's idealism during his student days in Vilna? Idealism was then as plentiful as food was scarce. With the release of moral energies that Judaism had historically tried to discipline, idealism gushed from Jewish youth as from a thawing mountain, spilling down into many rivers and streams. Historians try to sort out the Communists from the nationalists, the Hebraists from the Yiddishists, the Bundists from the Labor Zionists, the anti-Zionist Orthodox Agudah from the pro-Zionist Orthodox Mizrahi; but, swept up by the yearning for a better world, the young people who had come of age during the war were not always on Sunday what they had been before the latest rally on Saturday.

Leibl, for instance, originally wanted to study agriculture because he had decided to become a farmer in Palestine. When he learned that the university would not accept Jews into agriculture, he settled for chemistry (like Chaim Weizmann). His colleagues in the chemistry lab found him a room in the house of Anna Vladimirova Rosenthal, Vilna's inspiring Bundist leader, for whom Yiddish was a sacred trust but whose Jewish nationalism was thoroughly anti-Zionist.

But it was the Communists who held the moral edge over all the other political groups. Outlawed under Poland's Pilsudski regime, they were the only ones who had to function clandestinely, thus arousing sympathy as well as respect. By contrast, the Zionists who promised to take Jews out of Poland to Palestine seemed at times to be working hand in hand with the Polish nationalist government, and their popularity among some of the wealthier and religious Jews of the city almost lent them a bourgeois respectability.

Leibl put study ahead of politics, but he developed a reputation for foolhardy courage. He brought food to political prisoners, pretending to be their relative. One night, walking with his cousin, he refused the orders of some drunken Endecs, Polish nationalists, to get off the sidewalk, and when one of them brandished a pistol, Leibl tore open his shirt and cried, "Go ahead, shoot!" The Endec was with difficulty restrained by his friends.

The high point of Leibl's political activism came at the request of Chaim S., a childhood friend from Bialystok and an affiliated Communist who planned to slip from Poland into Russia on a party mission carrying 200 rubles in cash. Leibl helped him raise the required sum, and organized the illegal crossing. The two boys hired an experienced border-guide, giving him a down payment and promising the rest upon his return to Vilna with a prearranged password that Chaim would give him once he was safe on the other side. The friends mischievously agreed on the word *k'mat*, Hebrew and Yiddish for "almost"—but, when misspelled, an acronym for the Yiddish *kush mir in tukhes*, or kiss my ass.

Their plan succeeded, up to a point. The guide delivered passenger and password and was paid in full, but Chaim was never heard from again. According to rumor, he had been seized as a Polish spy and deported into the Russian interior. For years afterward, Chaim's mother in Bialystok would hound my grandparents, threatening to denounce Leibl to the authorities, holding their son responsible for her son's death. Grandfather, who was by then completely blind, took to sleeping with a wad of rubles under his pillow for the moment he would have to buy off an arresting policeman. He dubbed Leibl "Fishke the Red," after the beggar-hero of the Yiddish romance *Fishke the Lame* whose tender sympathies exceed his practical abilities. Since Leibl had in fact developed a limp, thought to be caused by rheumatoid arthritis, the epithet exposed the political idealist as an incipient cripple in more than one respect.

To the extent that Leibl had ever "been a Communist," he soon ceased to be one. Trotsky's aura may not have faded all at once, but neither did that non-Jewish Jew become my father's hero. Trotsky's prosecution of revolutionary terror against the rebellious sailors of Kronstadt and other real and imagined enemies weighed on my father's conscience, since he felt he had delivered his friend Chaim into the hands of the bloody regime. Until he left Vilna in 1929 to take his first job as a junior engineer, Leibl warned his Communist friends against slipping into Russia, as many were doing to escape local conditions and in expectation of a finer life. He began to understand the Revolution through its consequences, Marxism through Trotsky's enforcement of it.

But unlike his earlier boyish exchange of Moses for Marx, the collapse of his faith in Communism left his moral yearnings unchanneled. The search for truth that brought him such satisfaction in the laboratory had no parallel in politics. His questions could never be answered: *must*

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idealism, in its haste to perfect the species, become a murderous torrent that sweeps human beings away? If a man's good intentions bring evil consequences, is he still entitled to claim innocence? Might the Jews have been right after all to limit the human tendency to wickedness through a strict religious regimen, before aspiring to usher in a messianic age?

The ascetic habits Leibl had developed as a self-supporting student made him stricter than his father when it came to self-imposed discipline, but he lacked the advantage of his father's Sabbath days, which is to say the pleasure his father took in obeying God's law. In the years that I best remember him, my father's Sabbath mornings in Montreal were spent writing checks to charities, cultural projects, and individuals he helped to support. This might seem a decent substitute for the Jewish commandment of *tsedakah*, except that the checkbook does not sing out like a congregation of living Jews when a man is called up to the Torah to pledge his charity aloud.

FATHER's life in Canada defied the dichotomies of success and failure, rich and poor. What do you call a man who forfeits the profession he loves? From the moment he arrived as a new immigrant, Leibl, now also Leo, tried to find work as an engineer in the Canadian rubber industry; but as it was not yet hiring Jews, he went to work instead in the textile factory his family had bought in Huntingdon, Quebec, about 60 miles south of Montreal.

He did not like textile production as he had adored experimenting with rubber, and having once managed a factory he himself had built, he could not have relished his new job as a small shareholder in the family business. Mother, who took it upon herself to voice his unspoken thoughts, always referred to his work as "slaving for his brothers." He spent most of the week at the mill, staying overnight in a room he shared with one of his brothers at the Huntingdon Chateau. This grand hotel had been built during Prohibition as a whiskey hole for thirsty Americans. Its empty grandeur gave a man the sense that they had both seen better times.

Leo was a good manager and a good negotiator. The mill turned a profit, and as long as my father represented management, there was never a strike. Back in the city, he brought the same negotiating skills to the board of the Jewish day school that his children attended. My father is credited with having led the fight for expanding this school to the upper grades, in appreciation of which the library of Bialik High sports on its wall his name and a picture of him smiling.

As the factory prospered, we moved in 1950 into a splendid old house where each of us (by then) four children had his own bedroom, with a sun porch and basement apartment to spare. Mother used the magnificent living room for literary receptions in support of Yiddish culture. Invitations to her soirées required the purchase of a recent Yiddish book by a local writer, selections from which the author would read as the evening's entertainment. It goes without saying that Father's subsidy had helped to pay the publisher.

AND politics? By the end of the war, Communism should have lain buried along with fascism in their respective ruins. Certainly, where we lived in Montreal, the atrocities of the Soviet system were no secret. Many of the refugees who joined us in Montreal had spent the war in Russia; they spoke of Soviet commissars and victims, and of some of the former who had become some of the latter. A number of our acquaintances, sympathizers of the Jewish Bund, continued to mourn the execution by the Soviets of their beloved leaders, Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, despite many appeals from socialists around the world.

In 1945, Igor Gouzenko, a clerk in the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, gave the Canadian government abundant evidence of Soviet spy rings operating right under its nose. Whether or not his disclosures triggered the cold war, as some historians think, they did lead to the conviction for treason of Fred Rose, a Communist member of the Canadian parliament from the largely Jewish district of Montreal-Cartier. Eventually deported to Poland, Rose did not become a martyr like the executed Rosenbergs in the United States; in particular, having betrayed his Montreal constituents as well as his country, he aroused little sympathy on the Jewish street.

I think I know what people mean when they describe the 1950's as a decade of complacency, lacking in idealism. They mean that the Left in general, and Communism in particular, were losing influence. At the beginning of the decade, in Korea, Communism suffered its first major defeat, challenging the belief that its expansion was historically determined and inevitable. Khrushchev's revelations at the 20th Soviet Communist party conference that under Stalin the dictatorship of the proletariat had been the dictatorship of a tyrant were followed almost immediately by the march of Soviet troops into Hungary, crushing hopes for the promised thaw in Russian politics. Memoirs seeped into the West, any one of which (try Gustav Herling's 1951 *A World Apart*) could have condemned an empire.

Yet even my father felt uncomfortable invoking "fascists and Communists" in a single phrase. He wanted to distinguish between an ideology of power that had realized itself in totalitarianism and (what he saw as) a positive ideology that had deteriorated into totalitarianism. I think he clung to this distinction less for the sake of his own battered beliefs than for the martyred Rosa Luxemburg, Chaim S., and many other friends who

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had seemed to him pure of heart. He would have liked to condemn the historical consequences of Communism without damning splendid men and women who sacrificed their lives to it. He was not yet ready to give "idealism" a bad name.

Tenderness for the failed ideology was far more complicated within regular party circles. There was no counterpart north of the American border for the investigative mania of Senator Joseph McCarthy, and so Canadian Communists and fellow-travelers could not relish a sense of victimization as a substitute for confronting their political sins. Shortly after the death of Stalin, Montreal's United Jewish People's Order (UJPO), the Jewish Communist organization, faced a crisis when one of its leaders traveled to Moscow to see for himself why so many acquaintances had not been heard from; on his return he confirmed that most of the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia had been murdered. Ironically, it had been the wartime visit to Canada of the Soviet theater director Solomon Mikhoels and the Yiddish Communist poet Itsik Feffer that had allowed UJPO to claim the moral high ground in the "united struggle against fascism." Stalin's execution of these men could not be written off as yet another necessary sacrifice on the road to socialism.

Yet neither could the UJPO's members easily disband an organization that had claimed all their loyalties and, in providing for their social needs, defined the circle of their friends. To keep the face of Communism smiling, the organization now adopted the kind of cultural programming that had characterized the Popular Front of the 1930's. It threw its energies into folk music. Long before rock impresarios took to marketing their clients as ambassadors of international good will, some of my Communist friends organized songfests, hootenannies, and festivals of youth, where by joining your voice to tens or hundreds of others you were invited to step into the great Brotherhood of Man.

WHEN I was at college, it was a little galling to realize that I would never hear anyone like Trotsky, never meet anyone like Anna Vladimirova Rosenthal, never have to sleep on straw sacking as my father had done. Before I learned the word, I considered myself an epigone, descendant of a generation whose deprivation had been so much greater than mine that I could never test myself against the same standard of adversity. I would have been embarrassed to mention to my father the toothless Communism I discovered through folk music, and I was a little embarrassed myself to join the Folk Music Club that replaced the earlier Labor Progressive Party Club at McGill University. Still, I, like so many of my generation, was eager to experience at least some of the afterglow of that great revolutionary idealism that was said to have illumined our century.

In 1949, while on his way to Israel to work on a kibbutz, my brother had picked up a copy of *Youth Sings*, published that summer by the International Union of Students to coincide with the World Festival of Youth and Students in Budapest. When I took up the guitar, this was the hymnal I used to practice my chords. The book's preface, in vintage CP style, was irresistibly phony:

> There is no more pleasant or inspiring way in which to express friendship, international solidarity, and understanding, the deepest and most joyous feelings of young people, than through song. Folk songs, songs of work, student songs, songs of struggle, expressing the finest and best from the national culture of dozens of countries will . . . help to ensure that the spirit of the festival is carried to all the corners of the earth.

Only Pete Seeger ever recited such lines with conviction. Still, the knowledge that one is being manipulated by propaganda never prevented anyone from falling prey to it. Passionate youngsters had composed these songs on their way to creating a perfect world, or, as in Spain, on their way to defeating the black beast of fascism. Singing their music joined us to their faith in an unmediated bond of exaltation. Indeed, their faith was brighter than anything we ourselves had been offered, no one having taught us to pray or to sing on behalf of any other ultimate cause. The songs on those pages, some printed in the cyrillic alphabet, united us to the "Youth of the World," a more potent abstraction than "God of our Fathers."

Britain:

The people's flag is deepest red
It shrouded oft our martyr'd dead,
And ere their limbs grew stiff and cold
Their hearts blood dyed its every fold.
Then raise the scarlet standard high
Within its shade we'll live and die!
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,
We'll keep the red flag flying here!

Germany:

Spanish heavens spread their brilliant starlight
High above our trenches in the plain;
From the distance morning comes to greet us,
Calling us to battle once again.
Far off is our land,
Yet ready we stand.
We're fighting and winning for you,
Freiheit!

Ireland:

Come Workers sing a rebel song,
A song of love and hate;
Of love unto the lowly
And of hatred to the great.
The great who trod our fathers down,
Who steal our children's bread.
Whose hands of greed are stretched to rob
The living and the dead.

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Spain:
Viva la Quince Brigada
Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala
Viva la Quince Brigada,
Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala.
Que seha cubierto de gloria
Ay Carmela, Ay Carmela . . .

USSR:
Through the winter's cold and famine,
From the fields and from the towns;
At the call of Comrade Lenin
There arose the Partisans.

Battle-scarred and faded banners
Fluttered bravely on before;
But far deeper was the crimson
Of the recent wounds they bore.

United States of America:
Gwine to lay down my sword and shield
Down by the riverside,
Down by the riverside
Down by the riverside.
Gwine to study war no more.

Among the questions that did not occur to us to ask at the time: why should Russians be drenched in fighters' blood even as Americans were swearing off war? Why did Russians sing patriotically of "Moscow" and "Motherland" while Americans rejoiced in "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum" and rehearsed the sins of Jim Crow? How strange that the most powerful message of all—"Freedom!"—should be coming to us in German, while Canadians warbled "*L'Alouette*" and amused themselves with "*Nous nous amusons tous, tous, tous, / Nous nous amusons tous.*"

We did not think ourselves naive. We made fun of some of the cloying phrases as we sang them, mimicking foreign accents, composing our own parodies. All the same, when I plucked my guitar at the folk-music club, or sang along to my Folkway records, I could have sworn that the banks of *my* country were made of marble with a guard at every door, and the vaults stuffed with silver that the workers sweated for. In defying my manufacturer-father, I began to feel like my revolutionary father's daughter.

In his own way, it was my father who rescued me from this sentimental Communism, just as he had saved my life once before.

One day in my final year of college we were sitting together in the living room, with time to spare before the arrival of guests. I think the family was gathering that evening in celebration of Hanukkah. The snow had been falling for hours, and apart from vague concern for the safety of our visitors in their cars, it brought me an uncommon feeling of security. My mother would soon seat herself at the piano, and sing her favorite medley of winter songs: "*un do in heym iz freylakh reyn / on kelt fargessen mir.*" Just as the lyrics said, our home *was* joyously clean, the cold banished from our minds. I was happy to be alone with my father.

The doorbell rang, too early to be guests. Father and I both went to answer it. At the door stood a man with a shovel. He was not one of those professionals with a truck and a plow, but a man on foot, in a worn windbreaker and wool cap, with weary eyes. He asked my father if he could clear our path for a dollar fifty.

The path needed clearing. The professional with the plow had come and gone several hours earlier. In fact, I had been thinking that I ought to go out and do the job myself, but had kept putting it off because it was so sweet inside. Now I was sorry. I prayed that my father would simply hand this man his dollar fifty, saying, "That's all right, my friend. We'll manage the job ourselves." But Father accepted the man's offer, told him to ring the bell when he was through, and closed the door behind him.

When we returned to the living room, everything had changed. I could hear the sound of the shovel, like a fist on my conscience, striking blow after blow. Out there was a poor man working, and here, overprivileged, sat I inside. I wanted to protest; I would happily change places and do the work in the man's stead. I was angry at the unspoken accusation being leveled against me, and said to my father that he ought to have given the man the money, and let me shovel the walk.

Father looked genuinely surprised. "What does it have to do with you? If a man asks for work, and I have the work to give him, he is lucky and so am I. If he sets a reasonable price on his work, I pay him what he earns." That put an end to our conversation, but not to the questions it raised for me. Why should I have put my guilt ahead of another man's pride? Why did I prefer my father's charity to the thought of him as an employer? Was it compassion for the shoveler that made me want to fob him off with a donation, or tender feelings for myself? Wasn't it Father's greatest achievement to have given employment to so many workers over a lifetime?

It is hard to negotiate the inequalities that—next to the common fate that awaits us all—are the most characteristic feature of the human condition. Our passion for equality may be so great that we cannot bear to employ a man, lest it remind us of the *in*equality that remains whether we employ him or not. My father, who had known inequality from both sides, was not afraid of the responsibility of being someone's boss. As for me, I would soon enough look for shelter in the academy, where someone else hires, someone else fires, and in the still air of delightful study, the artifice of idealism can be kept alive.

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Holy Minimalism

Terry Teachout

THE entry for Philip Glass in the sixth edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, published in 1980, is 24 lines long. The entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, published in 1992, is 190 lines long. In the course of those twelve years, the composer of the minimalist opera *Einstein on the Beach* became the most influential figure in postwar American classical music, and the first American composer since Aaron Copland whose work appealed to a mass audience.

By now, the word "minimalism" (for which there was no entry in *Grove 6*) is familiar to most nonmusicians, and anyone who spends even a moderate amount of time listening to classical music will recognize the endlessly repeated rhythmic cells, brief snatches of melody, and long harmonic periods that are the building blocks of this music. What has been largely forgotten is the extent to which the adoption of these techniques by Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and their fellow minimalists represented a radical—and purposeful—break with the immediate musical past.

In the 70's, classical composition in America and Europe was still dominated by two schools of modernism: the rigorously organized serialism of the descendants of Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern and the no less rigorously disorganized "chance music" of John Cage and his followers. Though these two schools had little else in common, they shared the fervent belief that the traditional language of tonality was not a natural law of music but an arbitrary construct that had become exhausted by the end of the 19th century and would inevitably be replaced by newly invented, equally valid musical languages.

In a sense, this belief was vindicated by events. Though a few older composers, Benjamin Britten in England and Dmitri Shostakovich in Russia in particular, continued to produce tonal masterpieces well into the 70's, most of the members of the postwar musical establishment in Europe and America eventually embraced one of the two established styles of avant-garde composition, and younger traditionalists unwilling to follow suit soon found it all but impossible to get a hearing.

But serialism and chance music had something else in common: neither system "worked," at least not in the sense of being able to produce music capable of commanding the loyalty of mainstream performers or the concertgoing public. As a result, general interest in new music had dried up almost completely by 1970. Virtuosos neither played nor sang it; audiences learned to shun reflexively any piece by an unfamiliar composer. The avant-garde composers complained that modern listeners simply did not want new music, but they were wrong. What listeners wanted was *accessible* new music, and when it came along, they embraced it enthusiastically.

THE postmodern revival of interest in new music was dramatized this past February when the Kronos Quartet, the most successful chamber-music ensemble of our time, gave a well-attended series of four concerts at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM). Though nobody planned it that way, the first of these concerts, a program of string quartets by three living composers, two of them (Glass and George Crumb) Americans and the third (Henryk Górecki) a Pole, ended up being not so much an evening of chamber music as a historical tableau: a mural in three panels about the decline, fall, and replacement of the old avant-garde.

Founded in 1973, the Kronos Quartet is widely viewed in the music business as a paragon of how to market classical music at a time of mounting hostility to the very idea of high culture. The Kronos's repertoire consists exclusively of 20th-century music, mostly recent and newly commissioned works; the members of the group perform not in the usual evening dress but in contemporary attire with a downtown flavor, and their concerts employ amplification and theatrical lighting. Their most frequently requested encore is an arrangement for string quartet of "Purple Haze," the signature tune of the rock guitarist and 60's pop icon Jimi Hendrix.

That the Kronos should have set up shop at the Brooklyn Academy of Music for a four-concert residency was wholly fitting. BAM's Next Wave Festival specializes in the presentation of music, dance, and performance-art events by so-called "cutting-edge" performers who are in fact generously subsidized members in good standing of the contemporary cultural establishment. (I sometimes wonder if the main achievement of public funding of the arts in America has not been to make alienation an entitlement.) Though the Kronos Quartet's series was not a part of the Next Wave Festival, it might as well have been; the concerts were subsidized in part by the city and state of New York, and most of the new works performed by the group were commissioned for it by a representative assortment of

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foundations and publicly funded entities.[1]

Given all this, it seems almost supererogatory to consider the way the music at BAM was played—badly, for the most part. Among thoughtful musicians, the Kronos Quartet is admired more for its packaging than for its performances, which are often coarse and inelegant to the point of near-amateurishness. But the point of the program was not the raspy, ill-tuned playing of the quartet but the juxtaposition of Crumb, Glass, and Górecki, respectively the three most fashionable classical composers of the 70's, 80's, and 90's. A musical archeologist of the 21st century would be able to reconstruct with fair accuracy the entire history of classical music since 1970 simply by watching a videotape of this concert.

As it happens, listening to the Kronos Quartet play George Crumb's *Black Angels*, a piece for "electrified string quartet" composed in 1970, was an exercise not altogether unrelated to archeology. A quarter-century after the fact, it is hard to remember how often Crumb's music used to be played, or why it once sounded so fresh and original; *Black Angels* now comes across as hopelessly thin in inspiration, a mere skeleton of spectacular instrumental effects without any connective musical fabric.

It is tempting to dismiss Crumb's brief vogue as a fad, or a manifestation of the politics of the 70's. (*Black Angels* was composed in protest against the Vietnam war.) But his popularity, if undeserved, was nonetheless significant, for he was among the first well-known American composers of his generation to break, however tentatively, with the orthodoxies of the postwar avant-garde.

The Kronos Quartet's performance of *Black Angels* was a valuable reminder of how little food it takes to ease the hunger of a starving man. *Black Angels* is hardly more than a montage of sound effects: the players strike gongs, shake maracas, rap on their instruments, shout into microphones. But these effects, musically meaningless in themselves, are strung together with an admirable feel for dramatic pacing, an acute sensitivity to instrumental timbre and—most importantly—an emotional straightforwardness bordering on outright sentimentality. Placed next to a Bartók or Shostakovich quartet, *Black Angels* is as flimsy as a square of tissue paper.[2] But heard after, say, a work by avant-garde composers like Milton Babbitt or Karlheinz Stockhausen, it must have struck its first listeners as not only accessible but genuinely appealing.

For all its flashy surface appeal, however, *Black Angels* is also still recognizably a product of the postwar modernist aesthetic. Instead of breaking completely with that aesthetic, Crumb watered down its distinctive language in order to reach an audience eager for attractive new sounds. It was only a matter of time before a generation of younger composers would come along who, unlike Crumb, were prepared to jettison avant-garde orthodoxy altogether in favor of a musical style based on conventional concepts of harmony and rhythm.

Philip Glass was not only ready but eager to take that step. As he explained in a 1987 interview:

> Though there were many gifted and energetic composers and performers dedicated to serialism, the music to this day has not found general acceptance. It was music I had studied as a student and any further exercise of that kind interested me not at all. To me, it was music of the past, passing itself off as music of the present. After all, Arnold Schoenberg was about the same age as my grandfather.

Glass's new style, in which the materials of tonal music were reduced to their simplest constituent parts, was initially viewed with a mixture of confusion, skepticism, and outright hostility. But his career turned a corner when he began writing music for the stage, a milieu to which his new style was ideally suited in much the same way that the neutral musical idiom of background scores for Hollywood films enhances their visual content.

Einstein on the Beach, successfully produced in 1976 at the Metropolitan Opera House, made Glass an international celebrity. CBS Masterworks (now Sony Classical) signed him to a long-term recording contract in 1981, and his music soon became popular in the truest sense of the word: he collaborated with Laurie Anderson, David Byrne, Paul Simon, and Suzanne Vega on an album of rock-flavored songs called *Songs from Liquid Days*, and the Philip Glass Ensemble subsequently performed on the TV show *Saturday Night Live* in the guest spot normally reserved for rock acts.

The comparison with rock-and-roll is significant. The repetitive, incantatory qualities of minimalism were comfortably familiar to baby boomers raised on rock (especially those in the habit of using loud music as an accompaniment to the ingestion of mind-altering drugs). In addition, Glass's rediscovery of tonality was a breath of fresh air for more sophisticated listeners who had lost patience with the claustrophobic "maximalism" of total serialism and the aimless randomness of chance music.

Unfortunately, the simplicity of minimalism is the virtue of a vice, as was apparent when the Kronos Quartet played Glass's Fifth Quartet, composed in 1991, at BAM in February.[3] Just as *Black Angels* is a thesaurus of avant-garde timbral effects devoid of musical context, so is Glass's quartet a twenty-

[1] A case in point was *Cold War Suite*, a piece by Scott Johnson based on a taped lecture by the late left-wing polemicist I.F. Stone. According to the program, *Cold War Suite* "was commissioned for Kronos by the National Endowment for the Arts, Hancher Auditorium/University of Iowa, Lincoln Center, the Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State, the Lied Center at the University of Kansas, On the Boards, Northrop Auditorium at the University of Minnesota, and the North West Area Foundation." (Appropriately enough, Stone's lecture was originally broadcast by National Public Radio.)

[2] The Kronos Quartet's recording of *Black Angels* (Elektra Nonesuch 9 79242-2) is coupled, to devastating effect, with a performance of Shostakovich's Eighth Quartet.

[3] The Kronos Quartet's latest recording is of Glass's Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Quartets (Elektra Nonesuch 9 79356-2).

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minute-long parade of harmonic and rhythmic gestures of the utmost obviousness, repeated *ad infinitum* with minor modifications. Glass's style, divorced from the elaborate stage effects of the operas that first brought him fame, is too reductive in its use of traditional musical techniques to hold the attention of most serious listeners for more than a brief time.

Those who live by fashion die by fashion, and such would seem to be the fate of Philip Glass. Though he remains the elder statesman of the BAM crowd—he was on hand to take a bow at the end of the Kronos's performance of his Fifth Quartet—the school of composition with which he is identified appears to have run its course. Glass's recording contract with Sony has lapsed, and the critical attention once reserved for the premieres of his operas (and for the heavily politicized, audience-friendly minimalist docudramas of John Adams, the composer of *Nixon in China* and *The Death of Klinghoffer*) is now increasingly directed elsewhere. The caravan of taste has moved on.

MUSICAL styles do not die out of their own accord: they must be replaced. The decline of interest in American-style minimalism is due in part to the emergence of a new style of classical composition that has found a comparably large popular audience. There is no commonly accepted term for this style, though it is sometimes referred to as "European mysticism" or "holy minimalism." Its chief proponents are Górecki (1933-), the Estonian Arvo Pärt (1935-), and the British John Tavener (1944-). All three men are intensely religious, are associated with orthodox faiths, and write both secular scores and music intended for liturgical usage; all three use repetition in a manner broadly reminiscent of the American minimalists.

But while the "holy" part of the "holy-minimalist" tag is both accurate and relevant, the "minimalist" part is more problematic. The way in which these composers employ repetition is both highly personal and easily differentiated. In describing his music, Pärt uses the word "tintinnabulation," a term meant to evoke the bell-like repetition of chordal tones typical of his mature style. Górecki's more conventional array of compositional techniques includes both elaborate counterpoint and the ritualistic repetition of melodic fragments and harmonic patterns. Tavener's music relies primarily on the deployment of florid, chant-derived melodies over static chordal backdrops.

The best-known example of holy minimalism is Górecki's Third Symphony, Op. 36, composed in 1976 and subtitled "Symphony of Sorrowful Songs." It consists of three movements for soprano and string orchestra based on Polish texts. The first of these is a 15th-century Catholic prayer; the second is a prayer scrawled on the wall of a Gestapo prison cell by its anonymous occupant; the third is a Polish folk song about the death of a child. The austere yet ecstatic music to which Górecki has set these emotion-laden texts is permeated with the gently swaying melodic shapes of plainchant—a defining feature of holy minimalism. It is also unabashedly tonal.

The astonishing popularity of the Górecki Third, one recording of which had sold over 500,000 copies worldwide by the fall of 1993,[4] was initially treated as a fluke by many hostile critics, some of whom undoubtedly were angered as much by Górecki's overt piety as by his musical conservatism. Skillful marketing, too, has obviously played a central role in the vogue of the holy minimalists. (One record label, EMI, went straight to the source and released a cleverly packaged CD of Gregorian chants sung by the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos that became one of the fastest-selling classical recordings of all time.)

BUT the appeal of Górecki, Pärt, and Tavener is more than just a matter of marketing. The work of the American minimalists has proved as shallow as their grasp of the traditional musical language to which they turned in order to break free from the shackles of postwar modernism. By contrast, the work of the holy minimalists is deeply rooted in Western musical tradition; moreover, it does not flinch from directly addressing the permanent problems of belief and meaning with which the great artists of the West, musical and otherwise, have concerned themselves.

This high aspiration is all the more impressive in our postmodern age of triviality and camp. To hear Arvo Pärt lash out at postwar musical trends is to be irresistibly reminded of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's equally ferocious attacks on Western materialism: "When I left Russia," Pärt (who now lives in Germany) has said, "it came as a great surprise and disappointment to me to find here [in the West] composers playing in a sandbox."

Still, it is essential not to confuse good intentions with good works. Though the holy minimalists have already spawned dozens of imitators, the staying power of their music remains in doubt.

Tabula Rasa, the first album of Pärt's music to circulate widely in the West, seemed to herald the appearance of a new and original musical voice, but there is a sameness to Pärt's later compositions that leads one to believe he may be more a stylist than a genuine innovator.[5] Tavener's music is even more formula-ridden than that of Pärt; works like *The Protecting Veil* (1987), if more expressively ambitious than the music of the American minimalists, are just as reliant on a degree of repetition that quickly reaps diminishing returns. The appeal of Tavener's music clearly has more to do with its explicit religious content and palpable sincerity than with its musical imagination.[6]

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[4] Dawn Upshaw with David Zinman and the London Sinfonietta (Elektra Nonesuch 9 79282-2).

[5] *Tabula Rasa* contains the title piece, *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*, and two versions of *Fratres* (ECM New Series 1275).

[6] Gennadi Rozhdestvensky and the London Symphony have recorded Tavener's *The Protecting Veil*, with Steven Isserlis playing the cello solo (Virgin 0777 7590522 9).

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Górecki, however, continues to strike me as an artist of considerable depth, an impression fostered by frequent hearings of the Third Symphony and reinforced by the Kronos Quartet's performance at BAM of his Second Quartet, Op. 64, composed in 1991.[7] Though the use of repetition in this work, as in many of Górecki's other pieces, does at times test the limits of the attention span, the Second Quartet remains a powerful, thought-provoking composition. To point out that it is reminiscent of late Shostakovich is not to accuse Górecki of derivativeness but merely to acknowledge that his method is a part of the mainstream of 20th-century modernism—not the hermetic modernism of the New Viennese School and its sterile progeny, but the true modernism of Stravinsky, Bartók, Hindemith, and Shostakovich. All these composers proudly acknowledged their places in the great tradition of Western art and sought to expand the frontiers of tonality, rather than arrogantly seeking to create "new" musical languages out of whole cloth.

WHATEVER the ultimate value of the music of the holy minimalists, it is already safe to say that they will be remembered for having definitively freed themselves from the smothering embrace of the postwar avant-garde. What is also worth remembering, and all too easy to forget, is that they had help. Without wrongly positing the existence of a direct chain of influence, it is nonetheless correct to say that the long road away from Schoenberg and Cage to Henryk Górecki was paved in part by the easy-on-the-ear minimalism of Philip Glass and his contemporaries, as well as by the accessible avant-gardism of George Crumb.

The irony of this journey is that it has followed a circular path. It took classical music a full half-century to escape the *cul de sac* of hermetic modernism and reclaim the usable past of tonality. The rise of the holy minimalists recalls the remark Giuseppe Verdi made to a friend in 1871, "Let us turn back to the past: that will be progress."

It is also of no small interest that the composers who have done the most in recent years to revive the language of tonality should all be religious (not excluding Glass, a convert to Tibetan Buddhism). Regardless of one's own beliefs, there is something undeniably satisfying about the fact that the world of classical music at the end of the 20th century is dominated by three men who can say of tonality what G.K. Chesterton said of his rediscovery of religious faith:

> I freely confess all the idiotic ambitions of the end of the 19th century. I did, like all other solemn little boys, try to be in advance of the age. Like them I tried to be some ten minutes in advance of the truth. And I found that I was eighteen hundred years behind it. . . . I am the man who with the utmost daring discovered what had been discovered before.

[7] The Kronos has recorded the Second Quartet on Elektra Nonesuch 9 79319-2.

Observations

Agents of Influence

David Pryce-Jones

SOVIET archives, confessions, and memoirs are establishing as never before the extent of Soviet interference in the internal affairs of other countries—which turns out to have been far deeper than even the most vigilant observers ever supposed. Through terrorist movements, peace campaigns, strikes, and disinformation the Soviet Union sought either to exploit genuine grievances abroad or to create artificial ones. No other power has ever manipulated its opponents so imaginatively, or to such effect.

In the past, though the Soviet leadership used to reject with indignation any accusation of subverting Western democracies, glimpses of the reality could be obtained from Soviet defectors. These men—Walter Krivitsky, Igor Gouzenko, Ivan Pavlov, Arkady Shevchenko, and others—brought archival information or its equivalent, providing Western intelligence services with names of traitors and so-called agents of influence. In the nature of things, Western intelligence services preferred to release as little of this information as possible—an instinct which in retrospect can be seen to have contributed to the widespread ignorance in the West of Soviet aims.

And there was another source of Western ignorance: the mani-

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fold activities of a vast and mostly volunteer array of Soviet collaborators and "fellow-travelers," usually intellectuals well placed in the media, the arts, and the universities. Even now, with the opening of Soviet archives, the full range of their activities may never be known. Whitewashing or otherwise obscuring the nature of their collaboration, they can hope to place the Soviet Union in an ambiguous perspective which keeps alive the ideology of Communism. That is their last service to the cause. A recent episode in London helps to explain how this is to be done.

THE story begins in 1985, with the defection of a senior KGB officer, Oleg Gordievsky. His long, first-hand experience of Soviet subversion in Britain made Gordievsky invaluable to the British secret service, which seems to have provided him with a house and a salary and occasionally allowed him to appear in the media. Recently, and presumably with official clearance, he wrote his memoirs, which were submitted to a publisher (Macmillan) in late 1994.

Rumor immediately began to circulate that these memoirs—which are not to be published for several months yet—contained the names of at least a score of British public figures, including Labor-party Members of Parliament, who allegedly served as KGB agents or collaborators. The *Sunday Times* in due course supplied a preliminary list of these figures, who almost all proved to be trade-union bosses well-known as Communists or Soviet sympathizers.

In a class all his own was Michael Foot. Now eighty-one, Foot was for five years a minister in past Labor governments and for three years leader of the Labor party. His record as a veteran fellow-traveler was a significant element in his overwhelming defeat by Mrs. Thatcher in the general election of 1983. A defender of the pre-war Hitler-Stalin Pact, he had widely supported Soviet positions throughout the cold war, and had also been a vociferous advocate of unilateral British disarmament. In KGB files he appeared as the recipient of twelve payments of £150 each. Supposedly these were covert subsidies for *Tribune*, a hard-left weekly which Foot had once edited, and with which he is still associated. *Tribune* specialized in the argument that Soviet wrongdoing did indeed occur but that this in no way faulted Communism.

The revelation of Foot's name had been preceded by another trial balloon sent up by one of Gordievsky's ghostwriters. In an article in the weekly magazine the *Spectator* (December 10, 1994), he revealed that among hitherto unsuspected KGB agents in Britain was a journalist by the name of Richard Gott. For 30 years Gott had served on the *Guardian* newspaper as an editorial writer, foreign correspondent, and features editor; finally he was put in charge of its literary pages.

According to the *Spectator* article, Gott had been recruited by the KGB in the early 70's, but had then somewhat lapsed, only to be reactivated in 1984. The role of Gordievsky was not given its due weight in the article. Other controlling officers were referred to, and they were said to have passed Gott notes in a cheap wallet: £600 at a first meeting and an average of £300 for each later meeting. Quite how much money he accepted altogether was not specified.

AS IT happens, Richard Gott was a contemporary of mine at Oxford University, and we have friends and acquaintances in common. In 1962, after graduating, I was living in Haifa, Israel, researching the first of several books about the Middle East. Not far away, Gott (who is not Jewish) was at Kibbutz Ma'abarot, learning Hebrew in an *ulpan*. His signature, I see, is in the visitors' book I kept, and he appended an address in one of the smartest districts of London. At that time he declared himself to be an admirer of Israel, on the ground that it was a genuinely socialist society.

Amiable, with a squeak in his voice and a somewhat apologetic smile, Gott seemed a familiar type of the self-conscious eccentric, remaking the world according to the abstractions and compulsions in his head, one of the leftist beard-and-sandal brigade immortally caricatured by George Orwell. Another case-history in the making, he came from a privileged background—one uncle had been a well-known wartime general. As a student at Winchester, traditionally the most academic of schools, and then at Oxford, he had learned to despise the very establishment in which he had been educated to take his place. Communism offered him the heady prospect of rejecting his whole background while entering an establishment far more commanding than the British.

The *Guardian* was a natural habitat for him. With a daily circulation fluctuating between 300,000 and 400,000, it has long been the flagship publication of the Left. Under its original name, the *Manchester Guardian*, however, the paper had once exemplified the rather austere streak in British culture of Protestant nonconformism. "Comment is free but facts are sacred" was its proud motto.*

A highbrow reputation like the *Guardian*'s is slow to dissipate. The paper was first thrown off balance long ago by enthusiasm for Lenin and the Bolsheviks. But then, in the period of Stalin's collectivization and enforced famine, its Moscow correspondent was the late Malcolm Muggeridge, who in the British press was almost alone in reporting these crimes truthfully. In his memoirs, Muggeridge records how the Soviet official in charge of the foreign press, Konstantin Umansky, had the highest hopes for him and his paper, and was furious at Muggeridge's unexpected refusal to join in an orchestrated denial of reality. Soviet archives now reveal that Karl Radek,

* The paper, which has a weekly international edition, has lately taken over the *Observer*, an ailing Sunday newspaper which has made a comparable political trek. If, once upon a time, *Observer* readers could rely for information about Soviet reality from the likes of Arthur Koestler, George Orwell, and Richard Lowenthal, in the 80's its star columnist was Neal Ascherson, who liked to insist that whatever Communists might do in practice, the ideals of the Left remained untarnished.

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responsible for overall Soviet propaganda, had issued explicit instructions to make use of the *Manchester Guardian* as a leading outlet in the campaign to plant stories in the British press.

By the 60's and 70's, many and perhaps most *Guardian* writers identified the Soviet Union with the cause of virtue and hope, and the West with vice and decay. The paper promoted its special blend of advocacy for Western disarmament, pacifism, and militant feminism, and disdain for the mainstream cultural values of Britain and America. A 1975 comment by its American correspondent about Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, expelled from the Soviet Union shortly before, catches the characteristic tone of innuendo and misrepresentation that unspokenly justified Soviet ends:

> Solzhenitsyn believes that all international relations should be forged on the basis of an intense personal morality—his own—and firmly believes Communism to be foully evil and that even the remotest evidence of warmth toward it and its protagonists is morally wrong. That kind of talk has gone down extremely well with this society's more Neanderthal brothers and sisters and overnight, it seems fair to say, this man, who via the Book-of-the-Month Club (which has ensured that millions of unread copies of *Gulag* lie on coffee tables from Scarsdale to Sausalito) and the kind of media blitz so popular in this country, has become the darling of the redneck population.

Then there was the paper's Moscow correspondent, Martin Walker, one of whose themes was the comparability of the British and Soviet ways of life, especially on weekends, when Soviet families packed their possessions in station wagons and headed off to country homes—this, at a time when there was no market in either houses or cars in the Soviet Union, and the ratio of cars to population approximated that in West Africa. Facts had become free in the *Guardian*, but comment was sacred.

Even in such company, Richard Gott stood out. The Six-Day War of 1967 convinced him that Israel had converted from socialism into a monstrous brand of American-inspired imperialism, and he became a supporter of the PLO. Other particular heroes of his were Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in Cuba—he was proud to have been among the very first to pay respects to the corpse of Guevara—and Salvador Allende in Chile. He idealized South American terrorist movements, and the Maoists waging civil war in several African countries. Features and literary pages for which he was responsible were likely to celebrate someone or something unfamiliar to many readers but invariably flattering to Communism.

Like many Soviet collaborators in the Brezhnev era, Gott became anxious that the Soviet Union was not living up to expectations. Not that he saw its brutality at last—on the contrary, the problem was that the Kremlin was watering down Communism, and only in China were the purest of the pure setting a proper example. Despite this turn, the KGB must have perceived that Gott's espousal of Maoism offered a virtually undetectable cover; whatever version of Communism he promoted, he remained of use.

It is deeply ironic that one of Gott's journalistic specialties was, in the words of the *Spectator* article I referred to earlier,

> to unmask the hypocrisy of particular individuals [in the West]—politicians, bureaucrats, journalists—who claim to uphold freedom and democracy but whose actions are actually dictated by a secret agenda which has nothing to do with either.

Certainly no British publication has been louder than the *Guardian* in its accusations of declining probity in British public life. But when it came to Gott's own secret agenda, different rules applied.

Confronted with the *Spectator* article, Gott invoked an ingenious form of self-defense. Admitting the truth of the charge, he resigned immediately from the *Guardian*, but then claimed that the whole thing was a tempest in a teapot. The very day of his resignation an article by him appeared in the form of an open letter to Peter Preston, editor of the *Guardian*, under the cute title, "I Was a Mellow Traveler." In it, Gott pointed out that, after all, his "incorrigibly leftist" beliefs had been out in the open for all to read. Yes, he had taken "red gold," but this was not as a reward for services rendered but as advance expenses for costly trips to Vienna and Nicosia and Athens (where he met KBG controllers). To accept such expenses was "culpable stupidity," but nothing more. His sole regret was that he had not informed Preston about an interview he had held with the British secret service, which had summoned him for the purpose of "tidying up the details of the case."

"It would have been sensible for you," he now informed Preston insouciantly, "to know about this long and essentially harmless saga." And he continued, in the same jaunty vein: "I rather enjoyed the cloak-and-dagger atmosphere which will be familiar to anyone who has read the spy stories of the cold war." Finally, he claimed that he was no different from anyone else: "The cold war was a very bizarre period, and perhaps none of us always acted the way we should have done."

Here, then, was a nose-thumbing challenge to his editor, a man who presumably had taken Gott's opinions on trust, only to discover that he had been well and truly duped by a paid agent of the KGB. Yet Preston met this challenge in a reply printed below the "Mellow Traveler" letter, where he eulogized Gott as, of all things, a "free spirit," and as a brilliant journalist whose resignation he accepted only with the heaviest of hearts. "I know that nothing you wrote or commissioned for the paper was tainted," he said, without troubling to explain how he could conceivably know any such thing. And then he quipped that if the Russians thought of recruiting Richard Gott, it was no wonder they had lost the cold war.

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Not content with specious justification, Preston also went over onto the attack, claiming that the *Spectator* article was nothing but a piece of spiteful revenge for a campaign the *Guardian* had been conducting against a junior Conservative government minister whom it was accusing of accepting favors from an Arab friend and former business associate. The *Spectator* article, Preston concluded, was therefore so much "tactical slime."

A spate of comment followed in the British press, in which Gott attracted more sympathy than condemnation. One *Guardian* writer to rally to his side was, predictably, Martin Walker. Another defender was Christopher Hitchens, a leftist journalist now living in America, who in one place put the *Spectator* article down to McCarthyism, and in another to conspiracy on the part of the intelligence services. Neal Ascherson lamented about damage needlessly done to a left-wing position that had "integrity."*

Gordievsky's character was much savaged. By virtue of the fact that he had worked for the KGB, he was deemed untrustworthy, though similar strictures apparently did not apply to Gott. And just to cap it all off, the trustees who control the *Guardian* made an unexpected intervention in the affair by promoting Preston to a new post as editor-in-chief of both the *Guardian* and the *Observer.*

JUST how *are* we to judge Richard Gott? He was no Kim Philby, to be sure; he had nothing secret or important to tell the KGB. Yet he was highly valuable in his own way. His service consisted, in part, in preparing *Guardian* readers for their endless rounds of political demonstrations and marches, sit-ins at military bases, meetings, mass letters, and general fist-shaking at the authorities. With a steady diet of selective, distorted, and simply false information, he helped to craft and fortify their indignation and constant collective protest against the values which alone guaranteed them the freedom to behave as they pleased. In short, Richard Gott did his bit and more than his bit for those in the Kremlin manipulating the apparently spontaneous outbursts of public dissent in a country more than a thousand miles away.

Of course, the public dissenters were under no compulsion to buy or to read the *Guardian*, and if they wished to deceive themselves about reality, that was their business. The real accusation against Gott is not that he misled his readers—though he did so, knowingly and shamelessly. His true crime was against the prisoners in the gulag, whose population at the time Gott was pocketing his first wallet of KGB money was so large that nobody can number them accurately. Rightfully expecting support and solidarity from people who were free, these unfortunates could never have guessed that a leading staff member at a British newspaper of world renown had found it "harmless" to throw in his lot with the very same KGB which was holding them behind barbed wire.

AS FOR Michael Foot, he has rejected as a "shocking libel" the allegation that he had been a Soviet agent of influence, knowingly or unknowingly. Everybody to whom he spoke about it, he said in an initial reaction, had dismissed the very notion of such a possibility, and so he did not propose to sue. He claimed to be unable to remember whether he had in fact accepted any payments but saw no objection to such a thing in principle, explaining, "We can always take money for *Tribune.*" For instance, the paper had carried paid advertisements from Soviet sources, and that was only business. His contacts with the Soviets, he continued, had been at diplomatic levels, and he had visited the Soviet embassy as he might have done the American or German embassies. No distinction was to be drawn among the policies these governments were pursuing through their embassies.

True to form, the *Guardian* judged that the allegations against Foot had attracted "widespread ridicule" and published on its front page a photograph of him taken that day reading Karl Marx's *Capital.* Gott himself could hardly have improved upon a touch like that. But after a few days more, Foot announced that he proposed after all to take the *Sunday Times* to court.

ANYONE who collaborated with Nazism has been required to answer for it. The likes of Martin Heidegger, Bertrand de Jouvenel, and Paul de Man, by no means war criminals, in their various ways played a part in legitimizing a murderous enterprise. Yet no matter how great their intellectual distinction, they and those like them have been universally denounced as morally defective.

In just the same manner as they, Gott did what he could to legitimize another enterprise of mass murder. Now, he and others of like mind think it appropriate to shrug off this activity as so much frivolity, so much "culpable stupidity." But the truth about the Soviet Union is now out in the open. It is for the sake of that truth, and in the name of the victims, that those who collaborated with Soviet criminality have to be held to account.

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* In the United States, the *New York Times*, after inexplicably waiting a month to inform its readers about the Gott affair, played down its significance, reporting that the CIA and other Western spy agencies had, after all, routinely done the very same thing: "There is no doubt that the Soviets actively sought to cultivate Western opinion-makers, just as Western intelligence agents tried to propagate their own ideas and values abroad by covertly financing magazines and providing favors and trips to writers abroad."

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She Lost It at the Movies

Daniel J. Silver

An odd disjunction today affects our experience of the movies. On the one hand, never have films been so accomplished, so technically glossy. On the other, they just do not seem to matter the way they once did. Some people have pointed to the pervasiveness of videotape, which has made film more available than ever, as a culprit here. The other side of plenitude, they say, is an obvious diminution of scale and scope; the moviegoing experience is constrained not only by the small compass of the television set but, in a subtler way, by the sense of movies as casual and ready-to-hand consumables rather than as special events.

More fundamentally still, movies no longer seem as central as they once did in defining our culture. Of course, popular and/or controversial films still stir up much talk, but nothing to rival the urgency or the seriousness with which movies were discussed only a couple of decades ago. And not just discussed: it seemed then as if practically everyone with cultural aspirations wanted to be "into film," whether as a writer, a director, or, for that matter, a critic. Indeed, writing *about* the movies had become, by the early 60's, a respectable form of higher criticism, and even an academic discipline.

The notion of the movie critic as "consciousness-raising" guru is indissolubly linked to the name of Pauline Kael. In her generation-long career at the *New Yorker*, Kael acquired a following second to none among literate moviegoers (as well as a smaller, if fierce, chorus of detractors). When she retired in 1991, it was almost as if the prestige and authority of movie criticism went with her.

Now we have *For Keeps: 30 Years at the Movies*,* a huge compendium of Kael's reviews and essays. The volume consists of substantial selections from her earlier collections, including *I Lost It at the Movies* (1965), *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (1968), *Reeling* (1976), and *Movie Love* (1991), plus her monograph on Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (aptly named *Raising Kane*, 1971). She has announced that *For Keeps* is her last book—she is now in her seventies and in poor health—and so we have to take this hefty tome as a kind of statement, a last testament to what Kael meant for an era in which movies became the quintessential medium of cultural expression and the movie critic a gatekeeper of consciousness.

Kael traveled an unusual route for a future East-Coast urban intellectual. Born in 1919 on a farm near Petaluma, California, she grew up with an interest in the arts, trying her hand at music—she was apparently something of a budding violin prodigy—then playwriting, and finally film. After graduating from Berkeley, where she majored in philosophy, she wrote some radio plays, made a few short films, ran a couple of movie theaters, and composed notes for revivals of classic films. She first took up criticism while working for the Bay Area's local Pacifica radio station (the ultra-liberal public-radio franchise).

The movie business may have been centered in California, but the business of journalism was centered in New York, and so by the mid-1960's Kael made her move East. She wrote for a variety of national magazines, including the *New Republic*, before landing at the *New Yorker* in 1967, where by the next year she had cemented the position of chief reviewer.

At first blush, Kael and the *New Yorker* seemed a strange fit. Kael was famous for writing in a breezy, colloquial, even racy prose style, which at that time stood out oddly in the dry, chaste mold of the magazine. In the preface to this volume Kael herself wryly observes that she had many a fight with the late William Shawn, then the *New Yorker*'s editor, who was a sort of teetotaler in prose. Yet Shawn gave her a surprising amount of freedom. Or perhaps not so surprising—for Kael had the luck to start when the magazine itself was beginning to experiment in "relevance," trying to keep up with the cultural ferment of the 60's. The forty-something Kael was hardly a flower child, but she did bring a certain contemporaneity and with-it-ness which came to be much-prized by her fans.

From the beginning of her reviewing career Kael cultivated a posture as the feisty defender of certain values. What she stood for was a kind of aesthetic purity in film which, in her view, was always being compromised, on the one hand by meretricious commercial interests and on the other hand by the middlebrow pretensions of many of her fellow critics and other "official" cultural arbiters.

In staking out her aesthetic position, Kael echoed many of the motifs of the 60's counterculture—both in its *lumpen* and in its highbrow variants. Although she was not an ideologue in the usual political sense, her ideas about art were deeply informed by cultural ideology. Thus, in an age in which many intellectual pretenders affected disdain for conventional learning, Kael, too, was eager to show that she was no prim "schoolmarm"—as she styled the spirit of didacticism and love of "artsiness" that she found in such bourgeois precincts as the movie columns of the *New York Times*.

She aimed, in short, to shake up the establishment—by, among other things, championing the simple sensuous delights, even the trashiness, of moviegoing. For her, the

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* Dutton, 1,291 pp., $34.95.

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bugaboos were well-intentioned films like those of Stanley Kramer (*The Defiant Ones, On the Beach, Inherit the Wind,* etc.) that tried to draw attention to important social issues, and big "idea" movies, like *2001*. In particular, Kael excoriated realism, which she called "the self-conscious striving for integrity of humorless, untalented people" and which she found "unendurably boring."

Simple sensuality and lowbrow satisfactions were what, for Kael, were afforded by movies—the thrill of the chase, laughing at clownish antics, hissing the bad guys, cheering the good guys, and so on. But even while insisting that we accept what movies do best, namely, provide us with escapist entertainment, Kael also longed for something beyond, for true art. And what was true art at the movies? For Kael it turned out to embody the same qualities we enjoy in trash, but taken to a new level:

> Movie art is not . . . to be found in a return to that official high culture [i.e., of middlebrows and schoolmarms], it is what we have always found good in movies only more so. It's the subversive gesture carried further, the moments of excitement sustained longer and extended into new meanings.

This is not quite a coherent manifesto from which to draw firm aesthetic principles or even canons of taste. But, especially in its celebration of the "subversive gesture," it is once again very redolent of the cultural attitude of the 60's avant-garde. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of that avant-garde was the rediscovery and celebration of surrealism and dadaism, particularly as expressed in that quintessential 60's art form, the "happening." The extent to which Kael endorsed this general sensibility may be gauged from the following, characteristic attack on films that express mainstream values:

> Do even Disney movies or Doris Day movies do us lasting harm? . . . [I]t does seem to me that they affect the tone of a culture, that perhaps—and I don't mean to be facetious—they may poison us collectively though they don't injure us individually. There are women who want to see a world in which everything is pretty and cheerful and in which romance triumphs, . . . families who want movies to be an innocuous inspiration, a good example for the children (*The Sound of Music, The Singing Nun*). . . . These people are the reason slick, stale, rotting pictures make money; they're the reason so few pictures are any good. And in that way, this terrible conformist culture does affect us all.

This was written in 1969, in the era of Charles Manson's "helter-skelter," anonymous snipers, riotous carnage in the streets, and skyrocketing crime rates—happenings, one might say, *par excellence.* Yet to Pauline Kael the greatest moral peril imaginable was not anomie, not social chaos, but social conformism: too many singing nuns.

One genre that drew Kael's particular ire was that of Westerns, which she condemned as shallow, hackneyed, and disingenuous, as if their sole purpose were to satisfy some primitive ritualistic need of the male mind. She was also very nasty about the "Dirty Harry" series in which Clint Eastwood plays a tough, no-nonsense San Francisco cop who will do whatever it takes to get the bad guys.

Reviewing the first of the series, *Dirty Harry* (1971), directed by the action-picture veteran Don Siegel, Kael conceded the movie's virtues as a thriller but denounced it as "fascist." She found it appalling that audiences cheered the Eastwood character as he flouted every liberal convention about criminals' rights in order to stop a serial killer:

> If crime were caused by super-evil dragons, there would be no Miranda, no Escobedo; we could all be licensed to kill, like Dirty Harry. But since crime is caused by deprivation, misery, psychopathology, and social injustice, *Dirty Harry* is a deeply immoral movie.

Kael here seemed shockingly ignorant of the facts behind the famous Supreme Court cases she cited that gave their names to new protections for criminal defendants. (Miranda in particular was a cute customer, who confessed to raping and kidnapping a young woman.) And though famous for her supposed astuteness about movie audiences, she showed no understanding whatsoever of the frustrations felt by ordinary people at the impotence of civil institutions in the face of social rapine—frustrations that a movie like this drew upon for its power.

But of course Kael's own audience was not the excitable crowd filling the seats, it was the right-thinking crowd diligently reading her in the *New Yorker* every week. And here lay one secret of her success: she flattered her readers, confirming them in their superiority at once to the great unwashed and to such guardians of propriety as the staid, bourgeois *Times*. This far-out critic who applauded trash and the "subversive" gesture wrote, moreover, in a seductively easy manner, free of the pretentiousness of, say, the more austere and self-conscious Susan Sontag. In this way, and to a greater degree than any critic dealing with the arts for a major magazine, Pauline Kael helped to domesticate the attitudes of the 60's avant-garde.

Kael had another audience as well, in the new breed of actors and directors who came into their own in the 60's as the final breakdown of the big studios led to unprecedented independence and artistic freedom. Instead of being essentially contract employees, actors and directors in the "New Hollywood" could now put together their own package deals. Kael was to laud their work—the work of new stars like Warren Beatty, Jack Nicholson, and Julie Christie, as well as of the already venerable Marlon Brando, and of new directors like Robert Altman, Sam Peckinpah, and Brian De Palma.

It was a happy coincidence of a critic's enthusiasm finding ready objects of admiration in figures who were at the center of a new iconoclasm and an ironic, mock-

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ing sensibility. If the old Hollywood Left had wrapped its homilies in populist melodramas that were intended to appeal to basic decencies in the American people, the new group found nothing more risible, and nothing more derisory, than Americana. It envisioned typical middle-American values not just as so much corn but as pernicious myths, responsible for the stifling complacency, the conformity, the venality, and, at its worst, the harsh repressiveness of our society.

Kael waxed rhapsodic over Beatty's first big-time star vehicle, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967, directed by Arthur Penn), a third or fourth retelling of the sick little criminal history of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker. In the review, Kael had her dukes up for the mainstream critics who reviled the film for glorifying violence and the nasty lives of these petty white-trash hoods. For her part, she earnestly compared this new treatment with that of Fritz Lang in *You Only Live Once* (1937, starring Spencer Tracy as the Clyde character), arguing that Lang's version was the one that viewed the couple sympathetically, as decent folks gone astray, whereas Penn's film showed Clyde—in Beatty's mumbling, bumbling interpretation—as just a stupid rube with a vicious streak. This was disingenuous: the whole point of Penn's movie was to do down the rubes and the squares among whom Bonnie and Clyde moved—in the backward rural America portrayed in the film, the yokels were glad to be photographed with the criminals just to get their moment of fame. Condescension was what this movie was about, and what Kael celebrated in her essay on it.

Sam Peckinpah was another favorite director of Kael's—a bit surprising in light of Peckinpah's reputation as the greatest choreographer of graphic violence in screen history. But the Peckinpah she liked was the Peckinpah of *Ride the High Country* (1962) and *The Wild Bunch* (1969). What these two movies had in common was that they were both anti-Westerns, in which former adventurers and gunslingers were portrayed as aging, pathetic fools who—with the one shred of decency left to them—chose nihilistic destruction over the normal desuetude of life. This was the "poetic" Peckinpah, engaged in a quarrel with normalcy.

But then there was the "bad" Peckinpah: the maker of *Straw Dogs* (1971), a movie about an intellectual nerd who learns to become a man by killing off the vicious mob that attacks his home. It clearly caused Kael some distress to pan this movie, whose technical panache she went out of her way to praise. But like the "Dirty Harry" films, this, for her, was the work of a "fascist" aspect in Peckinpah, full of nonsense about blood-honor and primal rituals of manhood. That there might be an inescapable connection between Peckinpah's "poetic" side and his "fascist" side was a thought she never entertained. It simply did not seem to occur to her that one can only go so far in trashing bourgeois values before crossing over to a more fundamental rejection of social order. She, at any rate, constantly danced away from the moral implications of her own flirtations with nihilism.

IT WOULD be churlish and unfair to ignore Kael's many gifts as a critic. Her style is highly readable and lively, if more than occasionally vulgar for no apparent reason. When she is especially engaged by a movie, she can render its atmosphere, and evoke the experience of watching it, with singular vividness. And she has perhaps the best eye in the business for those tiny nuances of performance that make film acting a unique skill: see her very fine appreciation—reprinted here—of Cary Grant, who for her was the supreme film actor (a judgment that cannot be far wrong).

Still, one also cannot ignore the role Kael played in encouraging cultural nihilism in the movies and thus in undercutting a certain kind of laudable artistic aspiration—call it serious-minded realism. Aided and abetted by a generation of 60's elitists masquerading as experiential populists, she helped to plant the seeds of the contemporary mode of postmodernism, in which not only middle-class values but *all* values are kept floating in suspension, along with every artifact of culture, whether high or low: just so much junk to be endlessly cycled and recycled. To borrow from the title of Kael's book, one can only hope that this moment, too, will not be "for keeps." But as long as it lasts, the movies will continue to be less important to us than they once were.

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Where's Dad?

FATHERLESS AMERICA: CONFRONTING OUR MOST URGENT SOCIAL PROBLEM. BY DAVID BLANKENHORN. *Basic Books. 352 pp. $23.00.*

Reviewed by CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

WITH about half of all marriages in the U.S. nowadays proving temporary, with more than a million babies born each year to women who never wed in the first place, and with estimates that half of today's American children will spend at least a portion of their childhood in a single-parent family, it is hardly surprising that family issues have soared up the charts of problems that worry us. Which also qualifies them, of course, to be the butt of jokes, as in a recent cartoon depicting two youngish adults, one saying to the other, "It's only marriage I'm proposing after all, not a lifetime commitment."

Indeed, the past several years have seen an uncommonly swift change in how the issue of family meltdown is discussed. From derision at former Vice President Dan Quayle for his "Murphy Brown" speech and resentment over the prominence of "family values" at the 1992 Republican convention, the country may be moving toward something like a consensual judgment that, as the *Atlantic* titled its now-famous article by Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right."

Similar views have been expressed by high-ranking Clinton-administration officials, including the President himself, and by other prominent liberals like Jesse Jackson. More than a few analysts attribute the GOP election sweep in 1994 to popular dismay over the cultural and institutional decay signified by ephemeral families and surging illegitimacy rates. Welfare reform has reached the top of our domestic-policy priorities not because our current arrangements are all that expensive but because changing the rules is seen as a way to get people to alter their behavior, to take responsibility for their children, and not to have children they cannot or will not look after. The budget deficit may benefit from such reforms, but it is the morals deficit that really alarms us.

David Blankenhorn's eloquent book, *Fatherless America,* is thus well-timed. And he is amply qualified to write it. Blankenhorn founded and today heads the Institute of American Values and chairs a new endeavor called the National Fatherhood Initiative. He has impeccable credentials as an articulate, thoughtful, and moderate advocate devoted to the renewal of the American family in general and to responsible fatherhood in particular.

Blankenhorn's book is not, however, a manual for policy wonks bent on reconfiguring the rules that have brought us to our current pass. Nor is it primarily about welfare or even illegitimacy. It is a treatise on fatherlessness: why that plague is spreading; why it is so damaging to children and society alike; and, above all, why the elite culture has sanctioned, and even encouraged, its further spread.

Within that domain, the book is gutsy and clarifying. Its core is seven splendidly wrought chapters on what Blankenhorn terms "the cultural script": how our contemporary obsessions with widening individual and group rights, pursuing pleasure, rejecting authority, defying tradition, mocking institutions, relativizing values, diminishing religion, and sloughing off responsibility have conspired to weaken the family and devalue fatherhood.

These obsessions do not come from a hole in the ozone layer. Blankenhorn is candid and tough about the harm wrought by feminists, child-rearing advisers, divorce reformers, "experts" on gender differences, and more than a few postmodern sociologists, psychologists, therapists, and the like. He shows how the replacement of the "old father" (a strong, masculine, breadwinning figure of stability and authority) by the "new father" (nurturing, sharing, nonjudgmental, androgynous) leads inexorably to the "unnecessary father." And he does not flinch at exposing the harm this does to children, families, and society.

Ordinary people would appear to agree with Blankenhorn. In one of the more arresting sections of this book he recounts the results of focus groups and interviews he and his associates held with several hundred married, middle-class fathers. These men had no trouble settling on the characteristics of a "good family man." A Denver group, for example, chose such traits as "provider and protector"; "shows love of spouse and children through actions"; and "[has] biblical and moral values."

Blankenhorn discloses the great gulf between such largely traditional, morally grounded convictions about what fathers should be and do and what he terms "contemporary elite discourse on fatherhood." "In today's dominant cultural conversation," he writes:

> [P]robably the central prescription regarding fatherhood is to lower our standards. Expect and accept less. Instead of good fathers, settle for child-support payments, divorce reform, and other attempts to salvage something from the wreckage. Don't get too preachy. Focus more on rights than on responsibilities. Search for adequate substitutes for fathers.

Thus, as so often seems to be the case, most of the "experts" are light years away from the priorities and values of much of the populace, and are actively justifying and promoting that which the American middle class knows to be wrong.

We ought not to be surprised,

CHESTER E. FINN, JR. *is John M. Olin Fellow at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C.*

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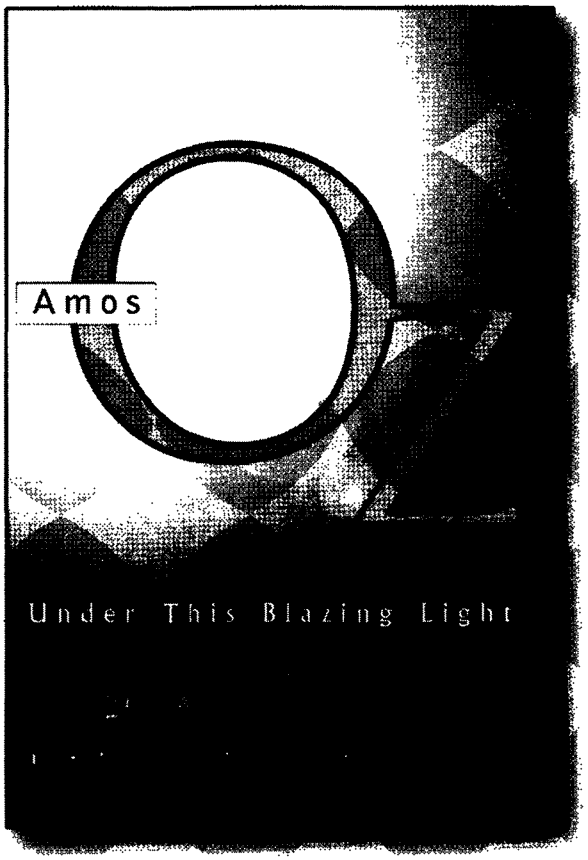
Under This Blazing Light

Amos Oz



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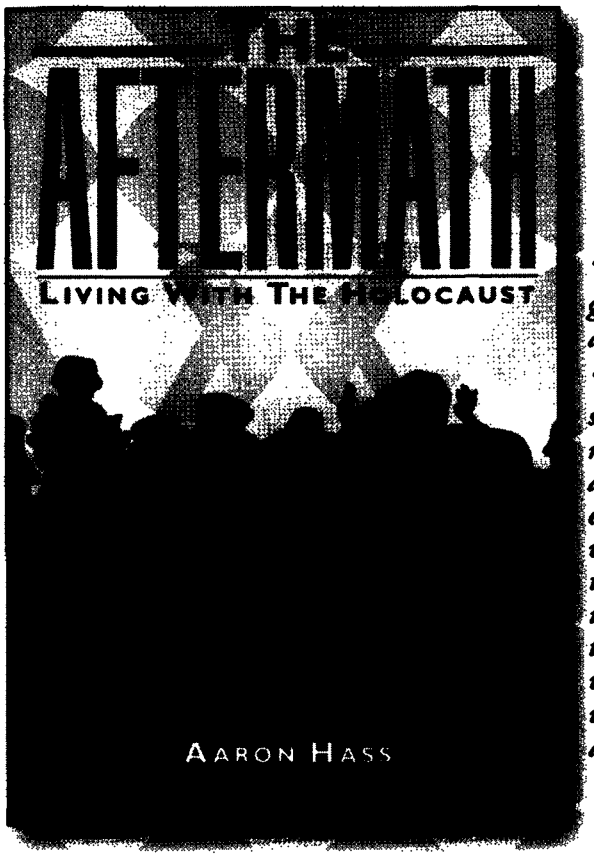

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then, that what was once thought deviant is becoming more commonplace. With respect to fatherlessness, this takes two primary forms—illegitimacy and divorce—but only the first of these has entered our policy discourse in a big way and is any longer deemed deviant.

Though illegitimacy—being born to an unmarried woman—is rising at a rapid clip, it accounted for just 30 percent of the ten million mothers (in 1990) living with children whose fathers were elsewhere. The other 70 percent of female-headed households resulted from divorce, separation, and desertion, i.e., from families that once existed but had come apart.

This huge population of fatherless children does not get anywhere near the attention that we have begun to pay to illegitimacy. And it may be the singular contribution of Blankenhorn's book to insist that, from the standpoint of both wounded child and degenerating society, fatherlessness, whatever its origin, is fatherlessness.

That "unformed families" get so much more notice than "former families" is, in my opinion, traceable to two causes.

First, we have persuaded ourselves that divorce is not as damaging to children as being born to an unmarried mother. Sometimes that is even true. All of us know adults who are better off without their former spouses and once in a while their children's lot also improves, especially if the divorced mother then marries someone who turns out to be a terrific (step)father.

But this is rare. Blankenhorn summarizes the relevant research, which shows that children

> in stepfamilies not only experienced far worse outcomes than did children who grew up with their two biological parents but also, on almost every measurement, experienced worse outcomes than did children from single-parent homes.

And as for the now-absent biological father, even when he provides financial support and regularly visits his progeny, Blankenhorn is brutally candid:

> The end of co-residency and the rupture of the parental alliance mean nothing less than the collapse of paternal authority. Visiting fatherhood almost always becomes disempowered fatherhood, a simulacrum of paternal capacity. . . . [O]nly wishful thinking permits us to continue viewing him as a parent at all. At bottom, he is no longer a father.

A second reason for the low visibility of the type of fatherlessness arising from family breakup has to do with social class. Whereas illegitimacy happens mostly among people who live on the other side of the tracks, much divorce and separation take place in "our" own neighborhoods, indeed among our friends and relations, and sometimes even ourselves. If we are honest, we will acknowledge that this makes it harder to condemn the practice, or even to depict it as a pressing social problem. We are engaged, in Senator Daniel P. Moynihan's evocative phrase, in "defining deviancy down." Doing otherwise would turn lots of social critics and public officials, many of them on their second wives and fathers of children who now live with someone else, into hypocrites.

Thus, in today's America there are many more "visiting fathers" than there are welfare mothers: a big truth that the "family-values" crowd seldom mentions, though a few brave commentators have broken ranks. Some months ago, for example, William J. Bennett told the Christian Coalition that it should be more concerned with divorce than with homosexuality, and that the greatest threat to the health of children and of society was not adults misbehaving with one another, but millions of families coming apart.

Even Blankenhorn seems to pull his punches when it comes to the what-should-be-done part of his otherwise excellent book. While his recommendations are unimpeachable, they are also bland and almost comically lacking in force. He urges, for example, that men take a fatherhood pledge; that the White House issue an annual report on the state of fatherhood in America; and that "a few good men should start creating Fathers' Clubs in their local communities."

Well, sure, why not? It might do some good. It cannot do any harm. But at a time when the nation's airwaves and legislative chambers are full of tough talk about orphanages, making mothers go to work whether they want to or not, denying benefits to immigrants, requiring teenage mothers to live with their own parents, ending the "entitlement" aspect of welfare, and refusing to increase payments to those who have additional out-of-wedlock children, these policy prescriptions seem pretty pallid stuff.

If we were to get truly serious about fatherlessness, we would not only be paying attention to reforming welfare and "restigmatizing" illegitimacy, we would also be devising ways to make divorce and separation scarce, at least in cases where marriage produces children. That does not mean just inventing better child-support arrangements or getting tougher with "deadbeat dads." (Blankenhorn documents the futility of most such efforts.) It means actually making divorce more difficult, painful, or embarrassing to obtain; punishing desertion; and stigmatizing separation.

One can readily imagine both some public policies that might help produce those effects and the cultural and attitudinal shifts that would be needed to undergird them. Yet I cannot conceive any of this actually coming to pass in the foreseeable future. Like Social Security reform, divorce and other forms of family break-up are likely to remain "off the table," if only because the political consequences of addressing them are too painful to contemplate. Instead, we will deal with the politically safe portion of the morals deficit, even though that leaves us a great distance away from a balanced morals budget. We will, in short, continue to pull our own punches.

In such an environment, Blankenhorn's book, even when it faintly resembles a "Just Say No" poster on the wall of a crack house, is welcome indeed.

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Tribal Dilemma

JEWS AND THE NEW AMERICAN SCENE. BY SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET AND EARL RAAB. *Harvard. 234 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID SINGER

IN THE early 1980's, the sociologist Charles Silberman published *A Certain People*, a book that depicted the American Jewish experience as an unqualified success and the American Jewish future as a golden prospect. By the late 1980's, the mood among students of American Jewry had turned more cautious; a group of scholars known as "transformationists" were conceding that American Jewish life was undergoing a change, even if they were not yet prepared to say that it was declining. Now, two veteran observers of the Jewish community, Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, have given us *Jews and the New American Scene*, a book that administers the intellectual equivalent of a cold shower to American Jewry.

Pessimism regarding Jewish life is usually associated with a deep concern about anti-Semitism, but this is not what animates Lipset and Raab. Indeed, as they see it, anti-Semitism is at present a marginal phenomenon in American society. What preoccupies these writers is not the external but the internal threat: a sharp fall-off in Jewish identity and a serious weakening of Jewish commitment. Lipset and Raab argue forcefully that American Jews have become victims of their own success, achieving integration and acceptance in the larger American society at the price of a declining sense of their own Jewishness.

A key feature of Lipset and Raab's analysis is its stress on structural factors. The authors repeatedly make the point that the problem is not one of will—either ill will on the part of an American society that would force Jews to give up their Jewishness, or a positive desire on the part of Jews to escape the Jewish condition. No, the atrophying of Jewish identity is due to the confluence of an otherwise happy set of circumstances: the unique openness of American society, and a structure of values that has enabled Jews to benefit uniquely from that openness. Lipset and Raab make this "double exceptionalism" the pivot of their argument:

> American exceptionalism refers to the unique historical conditions under which the nation was founded, and to the unprecedented national ideology they spawned. Jewish exceptionalism addresses the extraordinary history of the Jewish people and the extraordinary zeal with which American Jews have adopted the American creed and subsequently achieved economic, political, and social success.

As to the first factor, American exceptionalism, Lipset and Raab note that for *all* groups in our society (with the partial exception so far of blacks), "success and assimilation have gone hand in hand"; the erosion of group identity is "mainly a natural product of living in America." This is what the authors mean by the "tribal dilemma," which they define as the

> antagonism between individualism, which most ancestral group members value, and group identity, which they also cherish. In the ensuing conflict, tribal cohesion tends to succumb, despite all sentimental denials and institutional investments to the contrary.

But if the "tribal dilemma" is common to all minority groups, where does Jewish exceptionalism come in? Lipset and Raab's contention here is that although America's "openness, . . . egalitarianism, and . . . social heterogeneity" are available to all, Jews have been uniquely positioned to act on that promise. This is due to an "achievement drive" which Jews exhibit "in abundance in comparison with other religioethnic groups in the United States," and which has resulted in their attaining "higher levels of education, professional status, and income than all other subgroups." Thus, over the last three decades the Jews, a group constituting less than 3 percent of the American population,

> have made up 50 percent of the top 200 intellectuals, 40 percent of American Nobel Prize winners in science and economics, 20 percent of professors at the leading universities, 21 percent of high-level civil servants, 40 percent of partners in the leading law firms in New York and Washington, 26 percent of the reporters, editors, and executives of the major print and broadcast media, [and] 59 percent of the directors, writers, and producers of the 50 top-grossing motion pictures.

But here, in Lipset and Raab's view, lies the rub. For the openness of American society functions as a "double-edged sword, hacking away at disadvantage, and, on the backstroke, cutting away at Jewish identity." And so we find ourselves in a situation where "group identity and cohesiveness are severely eroding for the large majority" of Jews. Indeed, Lipset and Raab go so far as to argue that "American exceptionalism may threaten the future of Jews even more than did anti-Semitic hostilities of the past." After all, they point out, anti-Semitism can serve to strengthen bonds of solidarity among Jews. By contrast, in the prevailing condition of benevolent freedom, a "basic dwindling cycle is evident."

Signs of such "dwindling" abound. Lipset and Raab especially highlight the fact that "more than half of young Jews are marrying out of the faith, and conversions of the non-Jewish partners are in a distinct minority." In addition, "Jewish knowledge and education are, for most Jews, thin at best and becoming thinner." Then again, "traditional religious observance and synagogue attendance are decreasing." Add to this the fact that the "Jewish birthrate is low and declining" and the elements are in place for a cold calculation: the "cohesive American Jewish community can be expected to be reduced to a hard-core minimum in two generations," entailing the

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loss of "at least half of the present population."

Lipset and Raab are not reckless; they do not predict the *disappearance* of the community. They take it for granted that a "Jewish core will survive," and even allow that a "minority . . . are actually intensifying their connections." But the larger picture, they maintain, is nothing short of disastrous.

What to do? In a final turn of their argument, Lipset and Raab reiterate their point that Jewish assimilation in the United States reflects the working-out of an essentially benign process. America is "open and option-rich," and that is as it should be. Jews, in turn, seek to act on America's promise, and that is also as it should be. But—and this is the authors' big but—that gives an "inexorable" quality to the American dynamic, one which appears to place it "beyond social engineering." In the end, then, the authors of *Jews and the New American Scene* are left to describe a dilemma for which they see no apparent solution.

LIPSET and Raab are clearly in tune with a prevailing mood in Jewish communal circles today, and their book gives flesh to the anguished concern voiced by many over "Jewish continuity." But they put the case with greater subtlety and sophistication than others, citing a wealth of specific data to back up their key conclusions. Clearly, at this point the burden of proof is on anyone who would advance a more upbeat assessment of the condition of American Jewish identity today.

My own sense of the matter is that, if anything, Lipset and Raab understate the dimensions of the problem. For one thing, in their determination to focus attention on the internal threat, they play down the current significance of anti-Semitism in American society. Yet anti-Semitism exists, and not only among fringe elements. Even in the mainstream, there has been a noticeable withering away of the taboo against expressions of anti-Jewish attitudes: witness Pat Buchanan, Gore Vidal, Jesse Jackson, and the late George Ball. In this

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light, Lipset and Raab's statement that "official constraints against active bigotry show no signs of breaking down" is unfortunately too facile.

As for their argument that anti-Semitism shores up Jewish identity, that is true as far as it goes, although it is hardly a recipe for Jewish survival. In any case, high levels of anti-Semitism can also comfortably coexist with high levels of assimilation, as was true in pre-World War II Berlin, Prague, Vienna, and Budapest. Given the right set of conditions, anti-Semitism can raise the costs of being Jewish to a point where many, particularly those on the margins of Jewish life, will want out.

Still another matter that receives scant attention in *Jews and the New American Scene* is the emotional distancing from Israel that is taking place among American Jews. Israeli and American observers agree that younger cohorts of Jews in the United States (the Orthodox are a major exception) are far less deeply involved with the Jewish state than are their elders; they are less likely to see Israel as central to Jewish life, and have visited there in far fewer numbers. Since these are the very same Jews who come off least well on all other indicators of Jewish identity, clearly what is involved here is not a shift of interest from one Jewish realm to another but rather a wholesale abandonment of *any* Jewish focus. It is worth noting in this context that amid the euphoria surrounding the signing of the Israel-PLO accord, not one person came forward to suggest that a Jewish state at peace might prove personally attractive to any significant number of American Jews.

Last but hardly least, Lipset and Raab may assume too easily that a significant core of American Jews will survive no matter what. Even at the core, it needs to be emphasized, survival is contingent on the willingness of committed Jews to opt for an increased degree of separateness from American society. It is the Orthodox who have been setting an example in this regard, with clearly gratifying results in terms of religious vitality and the commitment of young people. The big question is whether non-Orthodox Jews are willing to follow suit, at least to some degree—for example, by choosing day-school education for their children. The signs here are not particularly promising.

In any event, Lipset and Raab are certainly correct in noting that for the overwhelming majority of American Jews, separatism in any form is a nonstarter; Jews may approve of multiculturalism for others, but not for themselves. Which is yet another reason why the particular "tribal dilemma" so acutely described in this book is not about to go away.

Thinking Machine

SHADOWS OF THE MIND: A SEARCH FOR THE MISSING SCIENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. BY ROGER PENROSE. *Oxford. 457 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by ADAM SCHULMAN

ROGER PENROSE, the distinguished mathematical physicist, has again entered the lists to rid the world of a terrible dragon. The name of this dragon is "strong artificial intelligence."

Strong AI, as its defenders call it, is both a widely held scientific thesis and an ongoing technological program. The thesis holds that the human mind is nothing but a fancy calculating machine—"a computer made of meat"—and that all thinking is merely computation; the program is to build faster and more powerful computers that will eventually be able to do everything the human mind can do and more. Penrose believes that the thesis is false and the program unrealizable, and he is confident that he can prove these assertions.

For Penrose, the task of showing that consciousness is not just computation is of much more than merely theoretical interest. He seems to feel that the pervasive pessimism of the modern age is fed by the haunting suspicion that we are no better than computing machines and that our claims to a distinctive humanity are illusory.

Penrose is also alarmed by the perverse hope, harbored by some AI enthusiasts, that computers will one day be so intelligent that we will turn to them for advice about curing the world of its man-made afflictions. If the age of wise robots should ever arrive, Penrose wonders what further purpose man would serve:

> Humanity itself will then have become obsolete. Perhaps, if we are lucky, they might keep us as pets; . . . or if we are clever, we might be able to transfer the "patterns of information" that are "ourselves" into robot form; . . . or perhaps we will not be that lucky and just not be that clever. . . .

Penrose approaches his subject with the passion of one bent on liberating mankind from the spiritual oppression of this grim outlook. It is not an accident that *Shadows of the Mind* begins with a fanciful prologue, loosely borrowed from Plato's *Republic*, in which a scientist imagines himself trying to convince his fellow men that they live in a gloomy cave and that the things they believe in are mere shadows of reality. The scientist is Roger Penrose, and the shadows are the computational models of the mind that currently dominate the cognitive sciences.

PENROSE, who is the Rouse Ball Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University, first did battle with strong AI five years ago in his best-selling book, *The Emperor's New Mind.** Evidently the dragon is not yet dead, for *Shadows of the Mind* is a restatement and continuation of the earlier book's argument, a chance to answer its critics, sharpen points that were vague or tentative, and press the inquiry further into unexplored territory.

In Part I of *Shadows of the Mind* Penrose makes his rigorous case that human consciousness cannot be fully understood in computa-

ADAM SCHULMAN, *a new contributor, is a tutor at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland.*

* Reviewed in COMMENTARY by Jeffrey Marsh, June 1990.—ED.

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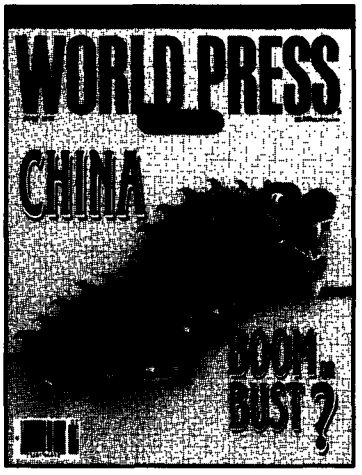

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tional terms. Part II is a frankly speculative search for new principles, both in physics and in neurobiology, that might one day accommodate a *non*computational model of human thought. For, unlike some critics of strong AI (notably the philosopher John Searle), Penrose firmly believes that the key to a satisfactory science of consciousness lies in a future physics that will differ substantially from our current conceptions.

How does Penrose prove that there is more to consciousness than mere computation? Most people will already find it inherently implausible that the diverse faculties of human consciousness—self-awareness, understanding, willing, imagining, feeling—differ only in complexity from the workings of, say, an IBM PC. Penrose, while sharing these suspicions, is not content to rest his proof on such vague appeals to introspective experience.

Instead, he is prepared to narrow considerably the ground of the argument in exchange for much greater certitude in the proof. He will show that one small part of human consciousness—a certain type of *mathematical* understanding—cannot, even in principle, be simulated by a computer program. If that limited result can be established, it is a reasonable inference that other aspects of our mental life are also beyond the reach of computers. "The floodgates will indeed be open!"

Following in the footsteps of the Oxford don John Lucas, Penrose rests his case on a famous theorem of mathematical logic discovered by Kurt Goedel in 1930. Goedel's theorem applies to any "formal system," i.e., a set of mathematical rules which we have translated into a code of uninterpreted symbols (e.g., strings of 0's and 1's) that can be manipulated without regard to their meanings.

Goedel showed that, for any such formal system, no matter how complete we try to make it, there will be true propositions in arithmetic that cannot be demonstrated within it. These "formally undecidable propositions" can still be proved true, but only by going outside the formal system that we have written down.

Penrose next draws on the work of Alan Turing, the father of digital computing, to show that a formal system in mathematics is precisely equivalent to an algorithm, i.e., a computational procedure that might be programmed into a generic computer (a Turing machine). On this basis he concludes that no computer program is capable of reaching all the mathematical truths accessible to human understanding.

But if our thoughts proceed noncomputationally, then so must the brain with which we think, and if the brain, then also the atoms and molecules of which the brain is composed. Here the argument reaches its dramatic peak. For Penrose maintains that all current physical theories are basically computational in nature. That is, any physical process governed by such theories can, at least in principle, be effectively simulated by a digital computer. Even quantum physics, with its mysterious "indeterminacy," merely adds an element of randomness and cannot, at least in its present form, provide a home for noncomputational processes. So Penrose's proof that *thought* transcends computation compels us to seek radical changes in the basic laws of physics itself.

It testifies to the originality of this book and to the audacity of its author that, in his quest to find a home for mind in nature, he is ready to contemplate profound changes in fundamental physics. Few scientists today have the breadth of knowledge and interest such an inquiry requires, while those professional philosophers who do take up the "mind-body problem" often stand in such awe of mathematical physics that they are afraid to challenge any of its tenets.

PART II of *Shadows of the Mind* initiates the reader into the profound mysteries of quantum physics. Penrose distinguishes the *puzzles* of the theory, exotic features of reality that we will just have to get used to, from its even stranger *paradoxes*, which to Penrose are signs that the theory itself is still incomplete. A typical puzzle is the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen phenomenon of "nonlocal entanglement," in which objects separated by vast distances can act as if still in communication with each other. The best-known paradox is that of "Schroedinger's Cat," which, if connected to a lethal quantum-mechanical device, would allegedly enter a "superposition" of states, simultaneously dead and alive.

Penrose believes that the noncomputational features of consciousness will become consistent with physics only when the paradox of Schroedinger's Cat has been eliminated from quantum physics altogether. What is needed is a *criterion* that would govern when the superpositions typical of the quantum world (e.g., particles in different places at once) collapse into the single states typical of the objects of ordinary experience (e.g., cats either dead or alive but not both). Penrose speculates daringly that the criterion for this "state vector reduction" will be found in the arcane field of quantum gravity, where minute changes in the curvature of space-time might, in some genuinely noncomputable way, precipitate the collapse of the quantum superposition.

Penrose turns, finally, to neurobiology to ask where in the brain such quantum-gravitational effects might play their role in consciousness. His answer: not in the networks of neurons that AI enthusiasts see as the seat of consciousness, but in the tiny subcellular *microtubules*, which may provide a sheltered environment within which quantum phenomena like non-local entanglement could occur coherently on a large scale. It is here that Penrose expects future scientific research to find the key that will liberate the mind from the "straitjacket of computation."

AFTER enjoying such a rich intellectual feast it may seem ungrateful of me to complain that the much-anticipated final course is, after all, rather meager.

By this book's end we are asked to believe that, while we think,

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deep inside the microtubules of our brain cells, at the borderline between gravity and quantum physics, there are large-scale nonlocally entangled quantum-coherent oscillations collapsing—and in a genuinely noncomputable manner to boot! But Penrose has had remarkably little to say about what it would really *mean* for this process, or human consciousness for that matter, to be noncomputable.

He does tell us what would *not* qualify as noncomputable: neither a random process, nor a chaotic one, nor one dependent on the environment will do. He suggests that a noncomputable process could still be deterministic (as in classical physics), but he does not pursue this provocative claim, perhaps because he is just not prepared to confront the idea of free will or genuine spontaneity in human thought and action. Straining to come up with an example of a noncomputable process, Penrose skates perilously close to science fiction, invoking a kind of relativistic time-travel in which the future could retroactively influence the past.

We are left with the impression that Penrose has trouble even conceiving of something noncomputable. To do so, he might have to be willing to open his mind to aspects of human experience other than the mathematical. Perhaps Penrose himself, despite his ambition to lead us out of the computational cave, still finds it hard to turn away from its familiar shadows.

Big Carrot, Small Stick

ROGUE STATES AND NUCLEAR OUTLAWS: AMERICA'S SEARCH FOR A NEW FOREIGN POLICY. BY MICHAEL KLARE. *Hill & Wang. 291 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by PETER W. RODMAN

MICHAEL KLARE is the *Nation*'s defense correspondent and one of the Left's leading critics of U.S. foreign and defense policies. During the 1980's, he regularly castigated the Reagan administration for its military build-up and other policies such as support for anti-Communist insurgents and counter-terrorism initiatives, all of which he saw as addressing nonexistent threats and/or feeding the self-aggrandizing appetites of the U.S. military-industrial complex.

Now, with these cold-war controversies behind us, Klare has returned as the author of a book analyzing U.S. policy vis-à-vis one of the main problems of the new era—"rogue states" and "nuclear outlaws," or the third-world radical regimes bent on obtaining weapons of mass destruction. Though he does not go so far as to offer excuses for what the rogue states do, his indignation is still principally directed, as before, at the United States. Klare's book is thus an interesting document: it is a revealing case study in the Left's intellectual confusion concerning the turbulent new world we have entered.

With Klare in particular, the confusion reflects an equal mixture of shrewdness, naiveté, and cynicism.

The shrewdness lies in Klare's analysis of U.S. bureaucratic politics and the evolution of U.S. military doctrine. Along with many others (some of whom have appeared in the pages of COMMENTARY) he observes, sensibly enough, that the Pentagon has had great difficulty in adjusting intellectually, structurally, and operationally to the end of the cold war. The U.S. military posture had been overwhelmingly geared to the Soviet and Warsaw Pact threat in Central Europe. Once that threat subsided, many in the Pentagon had nightmares of being left without a mission and a job.

In response, defense planners in 1989 and 1990 began to evoke the twin specters of terrorism and unconventional-weapons proliferation. Klare has fun tracing the eagerness with which they fastened onto the new category of threats posed by Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Syria, and a handful of other states. There is a continual note of skepticism in Klare's analysis, since he considers these threats to be in large part the product of a "demonology" inherited from the Reagan administration.

The 1990-91 Persian Gulf crisis, coming as it did while military planners were in the midst of searching for their new role, was, in Klare's view, a godsend for the Pentagon. Iraq not only seemed to confirm the existence of the new species of rogue threats, but also validated the Pentagon's bloated force structure. Whereas emerging military doctrine was now officially proclaiming the need for forces agile and flexible enough to deal with a variety of contingencies, Desert Storm seemed instead to confirm those who wanted most of all to maintain sizable ground and armored forces equipped with advanced technology and heavy firepower—in other words, the military structure we had maintained for 40 years defending against the Soviet threat.

Klare has a point. It is highly debatable whether the military requirements of the post-cold-war era can really be measured in "DSE's" or "Desert Storm Equiva-

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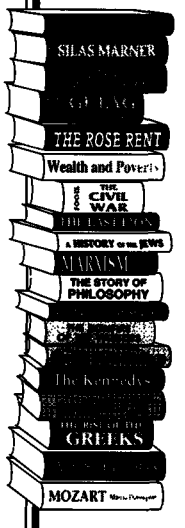

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lents," as the Pentagon incorrigibly puts it. There is a serious danger that the next rogue challenger, whether Iran or North Korea (or Iraq again) will have learned some lessons from Desert Storm and will not be so charitable as to permit the U.S. the same logistical, operational, and diplomatic advantages. Future challengers will undoubtedly play on our weaknesses, not our strengths. As A.J. Bacevich has pointed out, Mohammed Aidid's successful defiance of the U.S. in Somalia in 1993 may be only one small taste of things to come.*

Yet in response to the real problems in the Pentagon he describes, Klare is looking not for a better U.S. military strategy, but for the abandonment of military strategy altogether. This is where the naiveté comes in. Without defending the likes of Saddam Hussein, the Iranian mullahs, or North Korea's Kim Jong Il, Klare thoroughly disparages a posture of deterrence toward them or a military response to the dangers they pose.

What alternative strategy does he come up with? Klare seems to believe that containment and confrontation only serve to stiffen the resolve of outlaw states, while the diplomatic path almost always holds great and untapped promise. The United States, in short, should brandish a large carrot and a small stick.

In particular, Klare favors sharply reduced U.S. military forces and a much greater reliance on UN peacekeeping and mediation. He thus warmly approves of the Clinton administration's "multilateralist" approach to UN peacekeeping, as well as the 1994 agreement with North Korea in which we offered positive incentives to an outlaw state to rejoin "the international community on friendly terms."

Klare goes a step farther than merely preferring diplomacy to military force. He advocates a grand and comprehensive U.S. policy to ameliorate the social and economic ills which he sees as underlying all global turbulence: overpopulation, environmental degradation, unemployment, human-rights abuses, and the like. If rogue states *still* misbehave, he concedes that they "may, of course, constitute a genuine threat to U.S. or allied security." Even so, however,

> the tendency to assume the worst about rogues' intentions and, at times of crisis, to move quickly toward a military response, may prevent careful appraisal of these states' behavior and discourage the pursuit of diplomatic solutions.

BENEATH this almost breathtaking naiveté, finally, is a profound cynicism. Intellectually lost in a world in which the old Left-Right categories do not serve very well, Klare clings to anti-Americanism like a life preserver: suspicion of the motives behind U.S. policy is his one sure strategic principle. So far does he carry this that he cannot ever bring himself to admit that, cold war or no cold war, defense and military deterrence are as necessary to the United States as ever.

Naiveté is sometimes forgivable. Treating the U.S. military establishment as the core of our national-security problem is not. "Incoherent" is the most complimentary thing one can say about such an analysis.

* "Learning from Aidid," COMMENTARY, December 1993.

A New Covenant?

DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL. BY JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN. *Basic Books. 153 pp. $20.00.*

Reviewed by ADAM WOLFSON

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Ethics at the University of Chicago, is a self-described "feminist political theorist" and the author of several academic works on how Plato, Machiavelli, Hegel, and the like illuminate the condition of modern women. The mere fact that she is willing to take seriously the thought of these dead white males, and even to entertain an occasional conservative argument, has provoked other feminists to deny that she is one of them, and even to label her (the horror!) a classical liberal.

On the surface there may seem to be some basis for this accusation. In earlier books like *Public Man, Private Woman* and *Meditations on Modern Political Thought*, Elshtain argued that those dead white males are not for the dead, white, and male only. In her many essays she has defended the family, challenging those who caricature it as a hotbed of child abuse, wife battering, and patriarchy. And in a 1982 article in *Salmagundi*, she blasted the gay-liberation movement for its "politics of self-delusion and narcissistic insulation." Perhaps most tellingly of all, she has unrelentingly criticized the radical wing of the feminist movement, charging that its leading lights—Shulamith Firestone, Susan Brownmiller, Catharine MacKinnon, among others—are elitist thinkers whose sympathies are anti-democratic, even fascist.

But none of this quite adds up to being a classical liberal, much less a conservative. Indeed, particular opinions aside, what Elshtain's work seems to represent above all is an attempt to recapture those heady days of "community" in the 1960's when the cultural revolution was picking up steam and, for many young liberals, self-absorption became confused with having a social conscience. In her writings the same familiar names and events keep bubbling up, from the Kennedys and Nixon to Bob Dylan and the Beatles to the Vietnam war and the golden days of political protests. So too, 60's-style, do extended quotations from her diaries, along with ostentatious references to "consciousness-raising groups" wherein a youthful Elshtain and her friends engaged, for instance, in thought experiments about "what seemed tantalizing about homosexuality—being different, courting social danger, antagonizing 'proper folks,' including our families."

Now, in *Democracy On Trial*, adapted from a 1993 series of public lectures, Elshtain addresses a

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more general audience than she has done in the past. The book is relatively free of footnotes and academic jargon, and it is quite short, coming in at just over 150 pages spread over five chapters. The pace is quick—we move rapidly from the current state of American democracy, to the political forces that are said to be destroying it, to the philosophical roots of our travails—but the style is vintage Elshtain. With scarcely a conservative in sight, Elshtain draws upon a laundry list of Left-leaning intellectuals—from Christopher Lasch to Cornel West, from E.J. Dionne to Frank Rich to Christopher Hitchens, from Michael Walzer to Charles Taylor—in order to mount a defense of democracy against its various enemies. These, as it turns out, are also mainly on the Left—which makes the book something of a conversation within the family. But as with Elshtain's more scholarly work, the question remains: what does it add up to?

In a preface, Elshtain informs the reader:

> I have joined the ranks of the nervous generation. I believe we are in the danger zone. No outside power will take us over and destroy our freedom. We are perfectly capable, my nervousness tells me, of doing that to ourselves. . . .

What makes her nervous are two troubling phenomena: the breakdown of civil society, and what has come to replace it.

Her first chapter focuses on the breakdown. "Our current discontents," she writes, are traceable to a variety of forces: the gradual replacement of responsible individualism with selfish, acquisitive individualism ("egoism," Tocqueville called it); the growth of what Harvard's Mary Ann Glendon calls "rights talk," at the expense of a common sense of social obligation; the ideology of statism; and the corrosive forces of capitalism.

All this is familiar enough; conservatives have been writing about it for years. But Elshtain parts company with them in her solutions. Essentially, conservatives have offered two strategies for combating the decay of civil society. For some, the key word is "devolution"; if civil society is to flourish, Big Government must be tamed by handing over its responsibilities to localities. For others, like Gertrude Himmelfarb, the key word is "remoralize"; in addition to shrinking government, we must relearn the language and the habits of virtue.

Elshtain has little to say about either devolution or morality. Instead, she calls for a barely defined "new social covenant" in which government will play a key role by "respond[ing] to people's deepest concerns" and "by helping to stitch community institutions back together." How government is to respond to our "deepest concerns" when it can neither deliver the mail on time nor help the urban poor is a matter she does not fully explore, though later on it will form the main basis of her prescription for our future.

In her next two chapters Elshtain argues that social breakdown is not all that ails America. We are under assault from the "politics of displacement" and the "politics of difference." The former term refers to the process by which the realm of public values and public discourse is reduced to trivial concerns—think of President Clinton advertising his choice in underwear—and the latter to the process by which one's private identity comes to determine one's political outlook.

The perspective of the "politics of difference" is best summed up by the 1970's feminist slogan, "the personal is the political." Though Elshtain can sound a bit giddy in discussing this development in feminist discourse (it was, she opines, "exciting and transformative"), in general she judges its effects on our political culture quite harshly. For if politics is merely the surface manifestation of fixed sexual or racial identities, as radical feminists, gay liberationists, and multiculturalists claim, then democratic governance, which is to say the politics of compromise,

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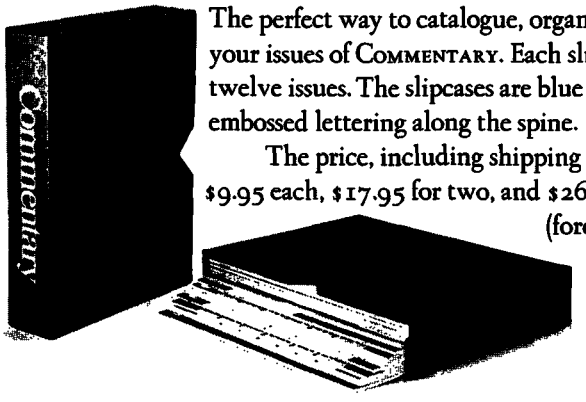

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becomes impossible. As Elshtain puts it, "to argue against my subjective pronouncements is also to unhinge my private identity."

This too is a familiar story, and again one told by conservatives for many years now. But it is good to have Elshtain joining others in pointing to the mortal danger such trends pose to America's democracy.

HAVING described what ails us, Elshtain next combs the history of political philosophy for possible remedies. On what theoretical foundation is our "new social covenant" to rest?

For her model of democracy, Elshtain skips over *The Federalist Papers*, of which she is, in fact, quite critical. Instead, she goes all the way back to ancient Athens, and in particular to the Athens celebrated in Pericles' famous Funeral Oration. She approvingly quotes Pericles' admonition to his fellow Athenians: "Fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Athens, as she really is, and . . . fall in love with her."

These, she comments, "are stirring words—the sort of oratory we Americans used to expect" on our civic holidays before we came to view them only as occasions for drinking beer and watching television. The sentiments evoked and celebrated in this kind of oratory are, in her view, precisely what we need to recapture if we are to repair our tattered society.

Yet here, in this one little example, we already see that Elshtain does not really understand the patient whose ills she is diagnosing. For American democracy, by design, bears little resemblance to Periclean Athens. That form of democracy, noble as it may sound, did not allow for an autonomous civil society or a private realm; to the contrary, Pericles insists that in "loving" their city, Athenians should regard their personal attachments—including the love between family members—as purely instrumental and subservient to the ends of the *polis*. This has very little to do with American democracy, and contrary to what Elshtain seems to think, a dose of it would only succeed in further corroding our already frayed social fabric.

Rebuilding America's civil society requires, one would think, an understanding of our own classic institutions, such as federalism, and our own classic virtues, such as enlightened self-interest, that sustain it. Among other things, it requires a proper appreciation of Thomas Hobbes, who, though neither a liberal nor a democrat, is widely and rightly considered among the founders of modern liberal democracy. Yet Elshtain, oddly, attacks the hard-headed Hobbes as a "utopian" and an enemy of democracy. In this she inadvertently joins hands with a number of writers in the "politics of difference" school who are highly critical of major features of Hobbes's political theory: they denounce the concepts of the social contract and consent as shams, representation as an obstacle to authentic democracy, individual rights as mere bourgeois property rights, and negative liberty (the right to be let alone) as a shadow of genuine liberty, which for them is the "freedom" to be part of some organic whole.

Though she has set out to defend civil society against its enemies, Elshtain thus ends up disowning its founders. Meaning to defend the bourgeois virtues of industry and civility, she ends up pining for the illiberal notion of selfless devotion to the state. Decrying the politics of difference, she ends up pronouncing, in its very accents, "Our differences must be recognized if they are to exist substantively."

In short, despite Elshtain's unhappiness with the multiculturalists and the feminists, and despite the many sharp and true things she has to say about our current troubles, she remains, as in her youth, too alienated from the sources of American democracy to be a helpful guide to their rehabilitation. Her feminist enemies are wrong: she is no classical liberal. Would that she were.

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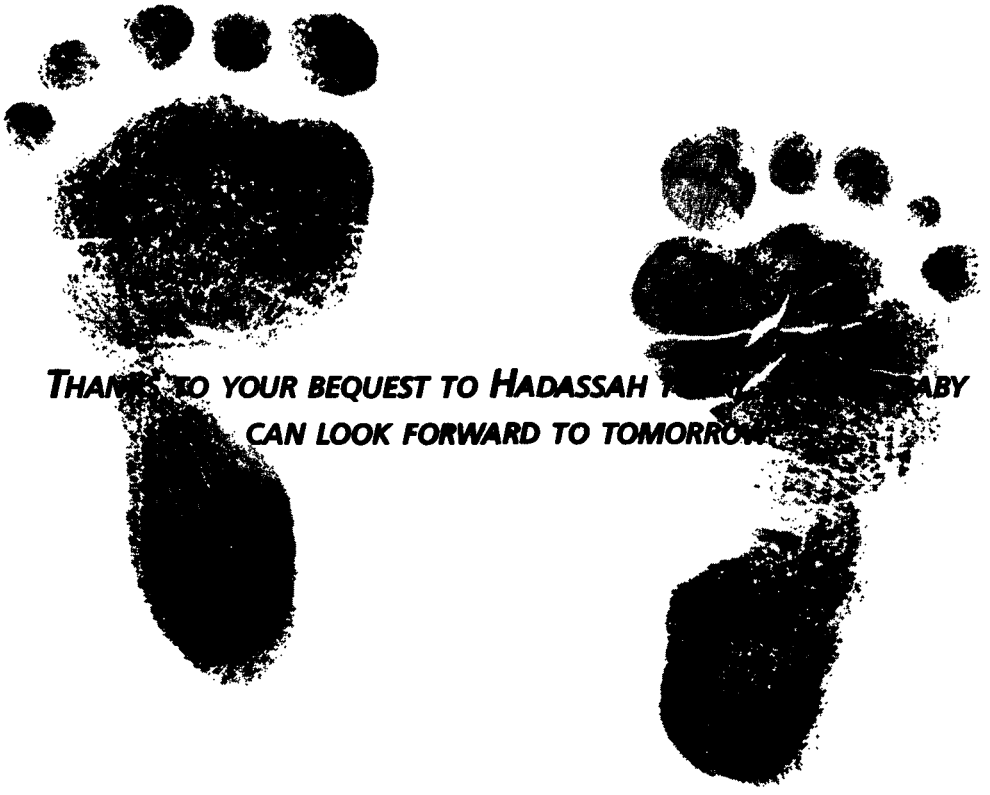

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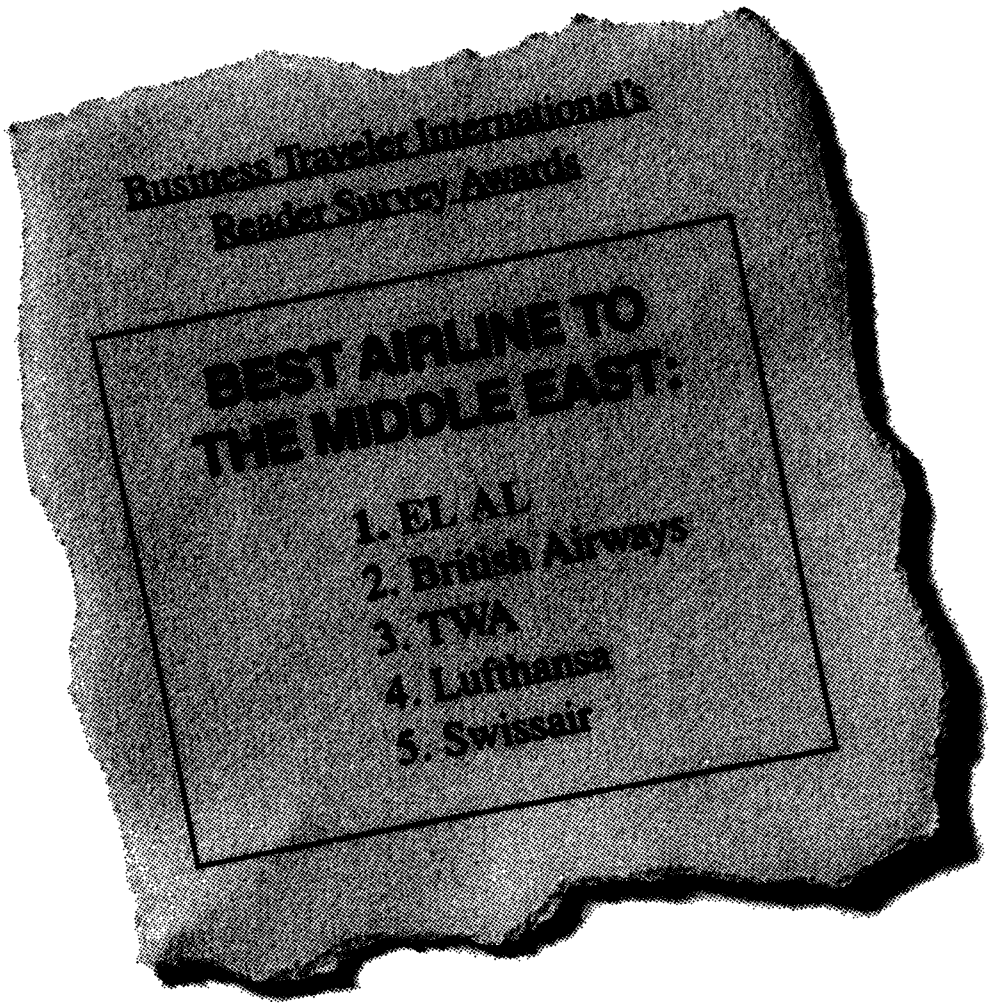

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